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"IT WAS YOUR IMAGE THAT INSPIRED ME WHEN ANY BRAVERY WAS WANTED," SAID COLONEL LENNOX.

A SOLDIER AND A MAN.

[A NOVELETTE.]

CHAPTER I.

"You don't mean half you say, Di—you know you don't!"

"I know I do!"

And the proud beauty flitted her fan, and looked supremely indifferent as her companion went on,—

"You don't; I know you better than you know yourself sometimes, and—"

"Are you sure of that, little one?"

"Quite sure, now and then. Quite sure about this; I saw the tears in your eyes when Major Thornaby was reading the story of that defence the other day, and he said—"

"Ah! spare me any of Major Thornaby's raptures, Vi, if you love me; he is something twaddly in his rhapsodies at the best of times. And I remember his being very proxy on the occasion you refer to; perhaps it was that brought

tears to my eyes, though I deny most emphatically that there were any there!"

"There were two big ones when he said he should like to be a lad again—such an one as either of these two—and he never could give effect to that story because of the big lump that came into his throat every time he spoke of it!"

"Major Thornaby is—well—an old woman!" Diana Halliday said, chasing the gnats away with her fan, and seeming to be intent on that operation and nothing else. "And I don't think the gentlemen in question would care to be called 'lads' even by him, Violet, my dear. I am quite sure Captain Brunton would not. I don't know much of the other person's sentiments."

"They are lads as compared to Major Thornaby," the girl Miss Halliday had called Violet rejoined; "and I know Darcie—that is Captain Brunton—would not mind what an old friend called him; and I fancy 'the other person,' as you call him, likes the major too well to care about such a trifle."

"Call him Darcie, you little goose, and don't look at me like a lamb in a passion!" laughed Miss Halliday. "Ferocity does not become you,

Miss Vandaleur. 'The other person' ought to be much obliged to you for your championship; I'll tell him when he comes back what a brave lance you have carried in his behalf."

And she put her arm round her cousin's waist—for that was the relationship between them—and kissed her with a sudden and rare caress, born of some new feeling that was underlying her careless and proud exterior. She was a lovely girl, this daughter and heiress of Sir John Halliday.

A girl with flashing dark eyes, and a clear brunette complexion that told of a southern origin. Her mother had had Italian blood in her veins, hence the dusky beauty that always seemed to associate Diana Halliday with orange groves, and soft moonlight and dreamy summer nights, when nature is at her loveliest.

She was mistress of her father's house—for her mother had been dead for many a year. And the succession of governesses that had held sway till she was old enough to do without them had one and all been obliged to take second rank and be the governed instead of the rulers.

There had been a danger that Diana Halliday would grow up wild and untamable; but the

fiery-tempered and impulsive girl had one great safeguard—her love for her father; an affection by means of which she might be made to do anything, no matter how disagreeable to her own feelings.

She learned to "please papa." She was obedient when appealed to through the medium of her affection, and she had escaped the fate that her long-suffering governesses predicted for her, and had grown up, if proud and self-willed, beautiful and fascinating beyond the power of resistance. The servants adored her, though she was imperious, and her will had to be law, no matter how distasteful. And the people round about—the poor especially—worshipped her in the same fashion. Even rivals—and there were many in the county—admitted her beauty and her charms, though they said, behind her back, after the manner of young ladies, that they could not imagine what all the men saw in her that no one else had a chance when she was by!

Violet Vandaleur, Sir John's ward and niece, his daughter's pet and dearest companion, was cast in a different mould. She was small and fair, with hair like trapped sunbeams, and a wild-rose sort of a complexion, that was as bewitching in its way as Diana's dark beauty.

She had never known her parents; they had died in India of cholera, within a day of each other, just as they were preparing to come home and make a place for themselves and their daughter in the world of English life.

Violet had been sent home too young to recollect either of them, and her only remembrance of her father and mother would be loving letters and pretty presents sent home by almost every mail—letters that made her weep whenever she looked at them and read the loving words of hope and expectation that filled the thin paper, and which had all turned out such a mockery. Plans for their future life, promises of what they would do and have; affectionate anticipation of the life the mother and daughter would lead together—all had been dropped from the dear hands that had not even warning enough of what was before them to pen a farewell to the loved and loving child waiting for them at home.

"Violet must come and live with us, papa," had been Miss Halliday's instant dictum when the sad news came; and Sir John, albeit he had no particular fancy for another young lady about the house—deeming, perhaps, his imperious daughter all-sufficient—consented, as he would have consented to anything Diana had proposed, even if he had not pitied and loved his dead sister's child as he did.

Violet had been at school when the terrible news came of her orphanage, and, though she was shocked and disappointed at the change in her life, she had seen so little of her parents, and known nothing of them save through letters, that she accepted her new home, and took Diana for her sister and Sir John for her father with an alacrity that might have seemed unfeeling to those who did not know her.

It was all a thing of the past now, and the "Sycamores" seemed as if it had been her home all her life.

She had shared Diana's governess and her affection, and her father's love, and five happy peaceful years had drifted by now, since she came a forlorn, pale girl in deep mourning, to be comforted and caressed by her splendid cousin.

Sir John had never repented the step he had taken in offering the lonely girl a home with him.

He had given some offence to Violet's paternal relations by taking possession of her so completely and they chose rather to ignore her existence in consequence.

But the only one who could have received her was a younger brother of her father's, Squire Vandaleur, of Compton Royal, in Northumberland—a fox-hunting, roystering sort of a man, with a wife who was "loud" to say the least of it, and whose numerous family were dragged up in a scrambling sort of a fashion—the boys dunces, as to their heads, but unquelled riders and sportsmen; and the girls horsey and slangy, and preferring the companionship of the grooms

and helpers, and the literature of the stables, to any other more feminine amusement.

Violet Vandaleur, with her refinement and her beauty, would have been as much out of place amongst them as a lady's lap-dog amongst a pack of hounds, and she rejoiced greatly at the decree that sent her to her mother's kindred instead of to her father's.

"I should have died of them, Di!" she said to her cousin, when they talked the matter over. "I don't like kennels and stables, and I think guns ought to be kept in a room by themselves and not left all over the house. I was there one vacation and they nearly frightened me to death. And the place was so dirty."

Poor Violet, with her fastidious organisation and innate refinement, could not bear anything untidy or approaching uncleanness—and the Vandaleur household came perilously near being very dirty.

The boys left their belongings about to be put away by anyone self-sacrificing enough to attend to them; and the girls considered it "finicking" to be tidy, and strewed the house with feminine litter till the rooms were scarcely habitable.

Violet gave great offence by her exceeding lukewarmness about going there again, and her maternal uncle was accused of trying to bias her that he might get possession of her if anything happened.

The Vandaleurs were always possessed with the notion that something would happen.

They looked upon India as a place where people were sure to die; and in this instance they were right, and though they had no reason to complain when Dalton Vandaleur's will was read and their handsome legacy forwarded to them, they always felt sore that they had not also the handling of Violet's large fortune and the administration of her affairs.

The fortune lost nothing by the management of Sir John Halliday.

He would as soon have thought of robbing a church as doing anything unjust to the orphan girl under his charge; and he made her an ample allowance and invested the rest of the money in such a fashion that the fortune had grown till it was reported that Miss Vandaleur was an heiress to an almost fabulous amount.

It was more than Diana would ever inherit, and she would be amply dowered when the time came for her father to give her away to any one else.

But she had reached her twentieth year, and there seemed no likelihood at present of any such event happening.

She had lovers in plenty, this merry, haughty, something-spoiled daughter of the baronet.

But hitherto she had sent them all to the right about with something that savoured of scorn. And the young men had gone away abashed, and consoled themselves and one another by saying that Miss Halliday "was so awfully clever and all that, don't you know, that a fellow hadn't a chance with her."

Clever enough she was, and "all that," too—if all that meant having a good stock of common sense, and knowing what manner of man she would like for her husband.

"He mustn't be a blind slave who will bow down and worship the hem of my garment," she said to Violet, whose loving little heart was already caught and given away for all time to Captain Darcie Brunton, as brave and gallant an officer as ever wore Her Majesty's uniform, and handsome and rich withal. "I want a man, and neither a money bag nor a simpering fool! I must have a master, my dear, when I choose a husband; some one who will say, 'Do this or do that.' And I shall do it like a lamb."

"The man doesn't breathe upon the earth, Di," Violet said, laughing; "only fancy any one saying such things to you."

"I can fancy it, and I rather think should like it," Miss Halliday, said, composedly. "I should hate a man like a lap dog, who would spend his life fetching and carrying if I only said the word. I want brains and inches as well, and a handsome face and a name that a woman could be proud of."

"And Stafford Lennox, who has all the qualifications, eh, Di? Brains and inches and a hand-

some face like an Apollo. I heard you say so only the other day, and is altogether a man that a woman might be proud of."

"Don't talk nonsense, my dear," Miss Halliday said, "and don't give your mind to thinking that I am going to take anybody, not even Stafford Lennox. He is handsome, I dare say, and I don't doubt his bravery. Every British officer is brave, of course. What would become of the men if they were not? But I don't think the gentleman in question is the man to make a good master to any woman. He thinks too much of himself."

"Oh, Di! he is as near perfection as possible."

"That's a very undutiful speech for you to make, Miss Vandaleur. How would Captain Brunton like to hear you say that of any man?"

"He would like me to say it of his friends, I am sure. I don't love him any the less because I can see that Colonel Lennox is good and nice and handsome, too. He isn't like Darcie, of course, and—"

"Of course not, you little goose. Leave me to find my own hero, child. I shall do it some day, I dare say. If I do not—"

"What will you do then?"

"Either settle down into an old maid, and oh! what a tartar I shall be—I pity my servants in anticipation—or take the first man that offers me and tyrannise over him instead. I must either be mistress or slave, and between you and me, Violet, my dear, I should prefer the slavery. A man that can't hold his own where a woman is concerned isn't worth his salt."

"What odd ideas you have, Di," Miss Vandaleur said.

"Born of mature reflection and the contemplation of my friends' non-success in their matrimonial speculations," Miss Halliday replied, composedly. "Be content with your own felicity, child, and leave me alone."

"I am content—more than content," Violet replied, and her eyes filled with tears as she spoke, "there never was a girl so blessed as I am."

"Time will show," her cousin said, quietly; "it brings quantities of things to light in a man's character, does matrimony."

Violet Vandaleur was a lucky girl, as she had said.

Her future husband was wealthy, good, and handsome—three qualifications that few girls can resist—and he and the gentleman she had called Stafford Lennox were expected home from Africa in a very few weeks.

Violet had begun to count the hours almost till she should see the man she loved again.

The papers were ringing with glowing accounts of the heroism of both gentlemen, who were fast friends, and had joined in a chivalric defence of an almost forced position, and quite an ovation was expected when they set foot in England again after their dangers and escape.

CHAPTER II.

"WELL, girls, so our heroes have landed!"

So spoke Sir John Halliday about a week after the conversation recorded in the last chapter, addressing his daughter and niece as he met them in the breakfast-room, his hands full of letters and papers.

"But I suspect that is not news. I see Vi and you, too, have your letters; I sent them down half an hour ago by Sawford."

"Vi's here, if you like, papa—not mine, no. It is no news. Can't you see from the state of Miss Vandaleur's eyelashes that she has nearly dissolved herself in tears already over the event? Don't begin again, there's a dear child, or there will be positively nothing of you left by the time that the gentlemen arrive. I suppose that they are coming here, straight, papa?"

"Of course, my dear!"

"And all Gillhampton will turn out to meet them, and Vi will be quite a heroine, and there will be speechifying, and what the stablemen call 'buttering-up,' and—ah! I never mind my chaff, dear," Miss Halliday added hastily, as Violet's

eyes filled with tears, the result of agitated excitement; and she looked as if she were on the verge of a burst of tears. "It is a proud thing to have any part in such a reception. I shall be out in the cold."

"You needn't be!"

"Be quiet, miss. I say I am," Diana retorted, and Sir John looked up with an amused face.

"The mistress of the Sycamores will hardly be that in anything that goes on here," he said. "Be civil to the colonel, Di, for my sake, if not for your own. He has stood face to face with a fearful death since he was here last, and without blenching; remember that when you feel inclined to snub him."

"He would not be Colonel Lennox if there had been anything of the poltroon about him," Miss Halliday said, coolly, handing her plate for some game pie as composedly as if she were talking of someone she had seen yesterday. "Major Thornaby has gone to meet them, I suppose!"

"Yes; there was quite an ovation at Southampton. The papers say such an episode in a war as 'Barker's Run' does not occur often. Make yourselves smart, girls, and do the honours of the Sycamores in your very best style."

"Make yourselves smart!" Miss Halliday said, when her father had left the room. "I wonder what men's ideas of smartness are! My notions will incline to muslin dresses and garden hats this hot day. Come along, Vi; we will make the house smart, at all events. Flowers shall welcome them if our dresses don't."

The Sycamores was some forty miles from Southampton, quite enough in the direct route to London to give the two officers an excuse for breaking their journey there. And, indeed, they would have gone out of their way to make their first visit in England there—Darcie Brunton because of his love, Stafford Lennox ostensibly because Sir John was his father's oldest friend, privately maybe for the sake of Sir John's daughter.

Violet Vandaleur was not very far-seeing, perhaps; but she had her own notions of the state of Diana's feelings with regard to the handsome young officer with whose name all Europe was ringing just now, and she was not in the least surprised when she knocked at her bedroom door a few minutes after her speech about the flowers to be refused admittance.

"Wait a minute, dear," Miss Halliday said, in a tone very unlike her usual merry speech; "I will come directly."

The laughter was gone out of her voice for a few brief minutes; and could Violet have peeped at her cousin she would have seen that her face was wet with tears—tears of joy at the safe return of the man she loved, though she would not acknowledge the fact even to herself.

"You are a fool, Diana Halliday!" she said to herself, looking at her tearful face in the glass, and dabbling her red eyes with eau de Cologne—"a senseless, idiotic fool! For all you know the man may be engaged three deep—he looks just the sort of man to have lots of brides elect! Most likely his ideal of womanly beauty and goodness is some squirming creature, who faints at the sight of a lily, and lives up to a teaspoon. That's the fashion nowadays; and dresses in gamboge green, turned up with terra cotta. Men don't want sense in these degenerate days—only affection; and I daresay Colonel Lennox isn't a bit better than the rest of them! You can come in now, Vi; I have done adorning myself."

She threw open the door as she spoke, and Violet noticed the red eyes and the flattered manner, and said nothing, only laughed a little satisfied laugh to herself.

"You look glorious, Di!" she said; and indeed Miss Halliday, in her creamy muslin dress, and her bunches of deep yellow flowers, looked like the dream of some colour-haunted artist.

"And you look like the queen of the fairies, child!" was the elder girl's retort, and she drew her cousin to the great glass, and surveyed the picture it presented with much satisfaction.

"It isn't many golden-haired women that have the same sense as you in matters of dress," she said, stroking the fair head, that made such a charming contrast to her own dark tresses.

"They generally choose to go in for scarlets and yellows, and all sorts of *outré* colours. You have the common sense to see what is becoming, and make a sylph of yourself instead of a Bacchante. Captain Darcie Brunton is a lucky man, little cousin!"

"And I am a lucky girl, Di! Come along, and get the flowers before it gets too hot; we shall not have time to arrange them if you do not hurry."

"I never hurry, my dear; but I am quite ready. We will have Muggins and a basket, and we will soon get enough to make the place gay."

It went to Muggins's heart to cut what his young mistress ordered in the way of choice flowers.

He loved them as if they were sentient things, and liked to see them where they grew, and not in hot rooms; but he had studied his papers, and knew what they were wanted for, and his enthusiasm was not less than that of his mistress.

"If flowers can speak a welcome to them they shall have them," he said, as he cut blossom after blossom. "There's nothing in England good enough for them, that there isn't!"

"Thank you, Muggins," Violet said; and Diana laughed and told the man that she shouldn't fail to tell the gentlemen of his admiration.

"You ought to have been a soldier, Muggins," she said.

"So I ought, miss—so I ought," Muggins replied, "and should have been. Nothing would have kept me from it if there had been any one to look after my mother; but she was all alone, and I couldn't have rested, knowing she had no one to keep a place for her in her old years. So I gave up the notion, though my heart was in it—I don't say it wasn't!"

"And you were as great a hero as the two who are coming home to-day," Miss Halliday said, in her unconcerned manner—"every bit as great, Muggins. It takes more trouble and pain to conquer one's self sometimes than to battle with a whole horde of savages. I want the very best roses you can give me, mind! They will help to take the smell of gunpowder out of the gentlemen's noses, perhaps. I'll make a pyramid of roses in the drawing room, Vi, and crown it with that big 'Marshall Neil' there. He looks like a hero, does he not?"

The pyramid of roses was made, and the rest of the flowers distributed, and lunch laid ready in the dining room, and the girls fell into the silence that is born of deep feeling, and listened for the sound of wheels and the tramp of horses.

Presently they came—a *posse* of gentlemen riding up the avenue. Sir John had sent horses to meet them, riding to the station himself with more than one neighbour, who had heard of the return, and were anxious to welcome the heroes of the proud story of heroism and danger that had come across the sea.

There was a moment's delighted greeting—"a chaos of entanglement," as Diana called it afterwards; and then Darcie Brunton managed to draw his darling away from the rest into the pretty breakfast parlour, and take her in his loving arms, and whisper how glad he was to hold her there again.

"I thought it would never be, little Vi," he said, "when the black fellows were swarming up our poor defences. It was one man against a hundred—and the hundred had the best of it!"

"Ah! don't talk of it," Violet said, with a shiver. "I have never been able to get it out of my head since I heard of it. I have fancied you out all to pieces, Darcie, and—"

"And I have come home whole," he said, turning off the quiver of her lips with a kiss, and looking at her with assuring eyes, "and not much the worse. Lennox fared worse than I did; he got an ugly wound in his arm, which will give him some trouble yet, I am afraid. But I must not monopolise you, child. You must come and talk to the other visitors. There is one come especially to see you."

"To see me?"

"Just so!"

"Who is it?"

"Guess!"

"I can't. I don't know any one."

"Your cousin, Arthur Vandaleur. You have not forgotten him!"

"I haven't forgotten any of them," Violet said, with a shrug of her pretty shoulders. "Only I don't want to see any of them again. What has he come for?"

"Sir John asked him. There has been a coolness between your father's and your mother's relations since you came home to England, and I think your uncle would like to set things right a bit. Anyway, he asked Mr. Vandaleur to come home with us and see his little cousin."

"I wish he hadn't; they are all so slangy and coarse. I can't bear them!"

"I think this one is a favourable specimen. He seems gentlemanly and quiet enough. From something he said I don't think he knows that I have any particular interest in you, my darling."

"Then don't tell him!" Violet said. "Oh! I wish he hadn't come—I don't want him, I'm sure. Don't let anyone tell him anything about it. I don't want him to question me, and talk as I know he would. Perhaps he will go away soon!"

"I believe Sir John has asked him to stay a week."

"Oh, dear!" said Violet, in dismay. "What shall we do with him? I know Di won't like him, and I detest the whole set of them. If you could only see their house, and hear the girls talk, you would understand why."

"I think I do understand," Captain Brunton answered, with a smile. "I have heard of the Vandaleur household. But you needn't be afraid of any one or anything now I am come back, my darling. I know how to take care of my treasure."

There was shelter and protection from any number of cousins in the loving voice and the encircling arm; and Violet went to the room where her cousin and the other gentlemen were—feeling relieved by the presence of the man she loved, and with all her troubles and agitation sent to the winds by the knowledge of her great happiness.

It was a pleasant meal—the luncheon that the two girls had ordered with such care and forethought—and the man or woman must have been hard to please, indeed, that was not satisfied with the frank, open manner, and charming conversation of the two officers.

Arthur Vandaleur turned out much more agreeable than Violet had pictured him. He was a fairly handsome young fellow, with an easy manner as of a man who had mixed with the world, and seen things and people from all points of view.

He was evidently much attracted by his young cousin, whom he had not seen since she was a child, when her striking beauty was a thing of the future, and there was nothing remarkable about her but lankiness and shyness.

"We could not have done so well for her at our place," he said to Sir John, in speaking of her; "our surroundings would not have fitted her like this."

"No, I suppose not!" the Baronet said. "Violet is very like her name—of the shrinking order of girls."

"And my sisters are the very opposite!"

"That is not what I was going to say."

"It is the truth, though. Maggie and Polly would rather ride to hounds than sit down with any piece of woman's work in their hands. And our little cousin has an impression that guns go off of themselves, whether they are loaded or not; and, altogether, I am afraid we should not have suited her in the north. They will be glad to hear she is so happy when I go back."

"I am very glad to see you here," Sir John said, hospitably; "and I hope this meeting will only be the beginning of a better intimacy, Mr. Vandaleur."

"And I hope so, too!" the young man replied—and added to himself that it should not be his fault if the intimacy did not ripen into

something that would lead to his marrying his cousin in due time.

Violet's fortune was not to be despised; and it was a pity that it should go out of the family.

He thought his cousin would marry him if the thing were brought about properly. He had never found the girl averse to him.

And then he was her cousin. It was just what her father, if he had been alive, would have liked. And he settled down to spend a very pleasant time at the Sycamores, ignorant of the fact that the girl he was looking upon as an easy prey was the promised wife of a man worth a thousand of him in every qualification of a gentleman and an honourable man!

CHAPTER III.

THE lunch was succeeded by another visit to the Sycamores—after the young officers had been to London and been fêted and petted to their hearts' content, and more; for Colonel Lennox was heard to say that the hottest half-hour at Barker's Run was easy work compared to the civilities of the London season, and the congratulations of the people who crowded to see them whenever there was a chance, and seemed to look upon them as part and parcel of a great show got up for their amusement.

Violet declared herself disappointed in them both—her own particular hero especially—that they did not respond more cordially to the goodwill of the multitude. She was so proud of them that she would never tire of the adulation that was showered upon them, and wondered at their seeming coldness about the royal favours, and the decoration by the hand of the Queen herself.

"You don't seem to care a bit for the honour!" she said to Darcie Brunton, when he came again to the Sycamores a greater man than ever, with the Victoria Cross in his valise to show his bride-elect, and half-a-score of honours besides that had not been his before.

"My darling!" he said, looking into her eager face with calm, serious eyes, "I do care for the honour; but when Her Majesty's hand touched my breast as she pinned that cross on my tunic, I went back in a flash to Barker's Run, and saw the brave fellows that we left lying there—men who ought to have stood beside us in her presence and who were braver ten thousand times than we were. That cross will always seem to me a memento of the dead; and I think Lennox feels the same about it."

"I understand," Violet said, gently. "I had forgotten all that, and thought nothing of anything but the honour to you and Colonel Lennox. Oh! Darcie, I am so glad you have come back to me!"

"Not more glad than I am, dear. But why specially now—has anything happened?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"Arthur Vandaleur!"

"Your cousin—what of him?"

"Oh! he is dreadful, Darcie. He——"

"What?"

"He wants to marry me!"

"Does he—that speaks well for his taste. I am rather glad the gentleman is not here. And so you would have none of him, eh, *petite*? He did not take long making up his mind that his cousin would make a nice little wife."

"Oh! don't laugh at me, Darcie. It was horrid!"

"I should imagine it was if you didn't want him. Tell me all about it. What did you say to him?"

"I don't know! I was frightened, I think, for I never thought of such a thing. And he wouldn't take a refusal from me, but went to my uncle."

"And what did Sir John say?"

"Not much, I fancy. I don't think he told him I was engaged. He only said that he would not give his consent. And I said I would not marry him—nothing could ever make me; and then he went away—but he was very angry. He said all sorts of horrible things about Uncle

John. He accused him of trying to bias me for the sake of the money; and he didn't behave like a gentleman at all. I was so thankful to see the last of him."

"He is not a gentleman at heart!" Darcie Brunton said. "His father is of a good old stock, but his mother comes of nobody in particular. There's a bad strain somewhere, and that young man shows it. It always comes out sometimes."

"But I come of the same stock, Darcie!" and Violet nestled up to her lover's side and smiled in his face. "How if the bad strain shows itself in me?"

"Your mother was a lady, child," was the quiet reply, "and your father the best man that ever lived—I have heard my father say so, and they were fast friends—and their child is worthy of her parents."

"But suppose I were not, Darcie, would you love me just as much? would you care for me if I were to do something bad, as some girls do, and call it a joke? My cousins used to."

"Don't imitate them in anything if you love me, Violet; they are not fit to be mentioned in the same breath as my pure little wood-flower. You couldn't do anything that would make me love you less, child; you would not be Violet Vandaleur if you did."

"I like to think that!" the girl said, with a strange persistence that might have been presentiment. "I like to think that, come what will—disgrace, ruin, anything—you would never alter, Darcie!"

"I could not alter, my darling. What makes you harp on such a theme?" the young man said, drawing her closer to him and looking in her sweet eyes. "Come what may you will always be the same to me! I am afraid what you have told me has upset you. I wish with all my heart that young upstart had never come near this place!"

"So do I with all my heart. I am afraid of him, Darcie; there is mischief in him. I don't know what or why, but there is an evil look in his eyes and a nasty curl in his mouth that are frightful sometimes when he does not think anyone is looking at him!"

"I shall get Sir John to take you to London for a while," Captain Brunton said, gravely; "your nerves have been worked upon more than is good for you. Put that fellow out of your head, and take me in instead. We must fix the day for our wedding, now that the African business is over and I have a chance of staying at home long enough to take a wife."

"I should like Diana to be married at the same time as me," Violet said, demurely.

And her lover laughed as he stooped and kissed her.

"I can't fancy Diana allowing herself to be married to anyone!" he said. "Who is the happy man, *petite*?"

"She will marry Colonel Lennox when he asks her," Violet replied. "He will win her if he goes the right way to work!"

"You are far-seeing, little person, how do you know?"

"Oh! I see quantities of things; and I know from all that she has said, and the way she has laughed at him and ridiculed the notion of there being anything in what he did out in Africa, that——"

"That's the oddest way of showing love I ever heard of!" Darcie said, laughing. "I shouldn't augur much good fortune from such proceedings as ridicule and irony."

"You don't know Di as I do. If she had not felt deeply she would have said nothing at all; it was to hide what she really did feel that she used to chaff and say my ecstasies were enough for both of us. I dare say they were, but she cried over the accounts that came home; and she had all the flowers in the garden cut the day you came home to decorate the house; and it wasn't for your sake, Darcie. And she cried so that morning that she was hardly fit to be seen, and——"

"And, in short, you think she is in love with Lennox! I know one thing—he loves her with all his heart, and the love of a man like that is not a thing to be thrown aside like an old glove. I hope she will not say him nay, and make his

life barren; he is worthy of better things than to have it spoiled by a woman!"

She did not say him nay. Could the lovers have seen her—even while they were speculating about her and her future—they would have been quite satisfied that she was not quite the heartless girl she chose to show herself sometimes.

Her sitting-room looked on to a pretty garden that had been her mother's—the prettiest bit of garden about the Sycamores; for it had been a fancy of the late Lady Halliday to have it like an old-fashioned farmhouse garden, and she forbade any formal pruning of plants to make them grow as the gardeners wished, and not as nature intended.

Scrupulous neatness was insisted on; but the flowers were fragrant and the birds tame, and there were no prettier nooks anywhere about than were found in the shady corners of "my lady's garden," as the servants called it, and Diana loved it as well as her mother had done.

The windows were open, and the birds outside were singing their merriest lays, and Diana Halliday sat there dreaming with the soft scent of the flowers and the hum of the bees filling the sweet summer air. Her thoughts wandered to "Barker's Run," a household word now in England, and the brave defence and the rewards that had been showered upon the heroes of that day of danger and bravery.

"Worthy of it; aye is he!" she said, softly, half aloud, and her thoughts were not of Darcie Brunton; "worthy of all that could be bestowed upon him, my hero—my master, if he but choose to say the word!"

A shadow fell across the sunlight, and the man whose name was trembling on her lips—whose image was in her heart—stood before her.

"Colonel Lennox!" she exclaimed, starting up in surprise and confusion.

"I believe I am trespassing," he said. "In my fashion of taking short cuts I got over the gate; I had not an idea I was coming across your private garden. Pray forgive me."

"I am very glad to see you there," she said, more gentle in her manner than was usual with her. She did not say come in, but her look invited him, and he stepped into the cool, shady room.

"This is my own sanctum," she said, pushing him a chair, "sacred to me and papa and Violet. You are privileged, I can assure you, and I hope you will duly appreciate the honour."

"I do from my heart! Brunton has forsaken me; he has paired off with Miss Vandaleur, and they are discussing their future in the summer-house yonder. Sir John has gone to the farm, but my arm is troubling me a little this morning, and I did not feel in trim for anything like exercise."

"I should think you have had enough exercise to last you some time," Diana said, bending her flushed face over some feminine trifle of work with which she was pretending to be occupied, "out in Africa I mean."

"Out yonder! Ah, yes! It was hot work while it lasted. We didn't know much about the luxury of a bed, or regular eating and drinking. Life is a scramble in the field, I can assure you, Miss Halliday."

"An awful realisation of a bad dream, I should think," Miss Halliday replied, "but you have had your reward since; you have won the people's worship and the Queen's favour, and the cross."

"Oh! yes, the cross; but that is nothing!"

"Nothing!"

"I mean a fellow does not think about that bit of bronze when he is doing anything that is likely to give it to him. It is duty and the business that is in hand when he is in danger, that he thinks of then."

"Will you show me your cross?"

Diana lifted her head and spoke hurriedly and eagerly, and he looked at her in astonishment. Where was all her indifference and coldness gone to? Her face had a new expression in it that he had never seen there before.

"Have you never seen one?" he asked.

"Only in Captain Brunton's hand the other evening," she replied, "and there was so much

chatter over it that I could not ask questions about it. I am very ignorant of these things."

Stafford Lennox went to his room and fetched the little case that had such a significant meaning, and laid it open on the table by her side. She looked at the little thing with grave interest.

"And the Queen's hand gave you this?" she said. "How proud you must be of it!"

Stafford Lennox smiled, and answered her almost as his friend had answered Violet.

"Proud!" he said, sadly. "I don't know. It is an honour, I suppose, and a man is very glad to have it; but it is a sad one, Miss Halliday. You know the old Scotch song—the fish-wife's song—what she says of her herrings—

'Ye may ca' them vulgar fairin'
Wives an' mitheren moist despairin'
Ca' them lives o' men!'

That little cross, is 'lives o' men' to me. The lives of fifty brave fellows, any one of whom would have given his life for mine—any one of whom was better worthy than I am to win and wear the decoration. It is only the fortune of war that has given it to me, Miss Halliday."

For Diana's head was bowed and her face was hidden on the hands that held the cross underneath them.

"Forgive me!" he said. "I should not touch upon such topics with a lady. The details of such a business as Barker's Run are not fit for your ears; but you—"

"I wanted to see the cross, yes," said Diana, raising her head, but keeping her face turned from him; "and I wanted to hear about it, but not when everyone was bursting out into inane praise of what they did not understand. There may have been a hundred there worthy of it, but the worthiest has won it, Colonel Lennox."

She pushed the cross towards him as she spoke, and there was a tear-drop on it. Stafford Lennox's heart stood still as he looked at her.

Was there a vein of deep feeling, after all, hidden under the exterior of carelessness and satire?

For a moment he could not speak, but words came to him at last, though low and trembling.

"Miss Halliday," he said; "Diana, for by that dear name I have thought of you all through the long weary months when death stared me in the face by day, and stood by my pillow at night. Shall I tell you whose image it was that inspired me when any bravery was wanted—who stood between me and death in that horrible struggle—whose sweet eyes were looking down upon me, while the army of devils were sweeping down upon us like a flood? I thought of you, and I seemed to have a charmed life; I breathed your name, and blows that rained upon me seemed to do me no harm. I thought of life with you, and could not die; I was spared—say, was it for happiness with you, or—"

He took her hands, unrelating now, and looked into her face; he had taken her by surprise and won; she had found her master, and he had won a greater victory than Barker's Run.

"Speak, sweet Di. Tell me that you love me," he said, softly.

And she bent her proud head, and said, falteringly,—

"I think I loved you before you went away, Stafford!"

CHAPTER IV.

FOUND her master! Yes, the stately beauty was a bond slave—caught and caged—and wonderfully happy in her bondage.

Violet laughed, and declared that Colonel Lennox had bought Diana with his cross; but she knew, in her heart, that it was the noble character of the brave soldier that had won her cousin, and she rejoiced with her with all her warm little heart.

Diana would have no sympathy in her new happiness. The thing was done, she declared, in her usual, nonchalant fashion, and there was no occasion for gush over it.

If Colonel Lennox was going to hang round the place like a tamed cat she should undo it all

again, and have nothing further to do with him or matrimony.

Violet was horrified at her; and her father, delighted at the prospect that such a union offered to his beloved child, though he was deeply grieved at the thought of losing her, lectured her on the enormity of her conduct; but the Colonel only laughed, and said he had a good deal of the cat about him.

He could understand when he was driven away, but he should return, and seize his prey when he was least expected.

"You little goose!" Diana said to her cousin, when Violet expostulated with her on the extreme harshness of her demeanour to the man she had accepted; "do you think that Stafford and I don't understand each other? Would you have me fling myself into his arms after every half-hour's separation, and favour him with floods of tears upon every possible occasion? A modified edition of such transports is becoming in you and small persons of the kittern order of women; but it would be outrageously idiotic of me to indulge in gush. Leave me and Stafford alone, child, and attend to your own love-making."

"I wouldn't be so cold to Darcie for all the wide world, as you are to the Colonel," Violet said, oracularly—she had been engaged six months, and was therefore an authority. "He would think I did not love him."

"Ah! you have educated him to expect it," Diana said, quietly. "Colonel Lennox and I are staid, elderly people, and, as I said before, we understand each other."

That they did. Stafford Lennox was well content to endure the sharp speeches and seeming indifference of the woman he loved so well, knowing, as he did, that she had given him her whole heart.

She was chary of her caresses, but they meant volumes when she did bestow them. There was more earnestness in one of Diana's soft kisses—so rarely given—and more purpose in half-a-dozen of her gentle words, when they did come, than in all Violet's lavish endearments; and Stafford Lennox knew it, and was satisfied.

"It was worth Barker's Run to have won this reward," he said to Sir John, when they were discussing the matter. "Diana is the only woman I have ever cared for in my life. If she had said me nay, I should have never married."

"You think so," the Baronet replied, "but there are other girls in plenty, Colonel Lennox!"

"Not for me! The earth has only held one for me ever since I knew what the love of a man's whole heart for one woman meant; and that one was your daughter."

"She is worthy of it," Sir John said. "My girl is a good girl, and one of whom any father might well be proud. She is wilful and strange in her manner, to the outside world, but in her home—ah! the pang that it will be to me to part with her will tell what she has been in her home."

Sir John paused for a moment, and then, as if he could not trust himself to speak further on that subject, he said suddenly,—

"Have you heard anything of young Vandaleur lately?"

"Not for some weeks! Why?"

"I have another letter from him this morning, pestering me to let him marry Violet. The child would not have him even if she were free. I must explain to him how matters stand, and make an end of the business. It was very foolish not to tell him when I had him here; but the little one had some feeling against it, and I must say the young fellow did not behave in a fashion to invite any confidence. He chose to consider himself wronged in that Violet would have none of him, and accused me in plain terms of trying to bias her. Poor child! if she had chosen her cousin instead of Captain Brunton I should have let her have her own way, I expect; though I am more glad than I can tell you that there was no chance of that. I don't like Arthur Vandaleur!"

"Nor I!"

"He is very plausible, and has the outward manners of a gentleman; but I fancy he leads

rather a shady sort of life in town, and knows more of the mysteries of the betting-ring and the gambling fraternity in general than I should like in Violet's husband. I am thankful, when I think of it, that she is safe."

"Why did you ask him here, if it isn't a rude question?" Colonel Lennox asked. "He is hardly your sort."

"Not at all; but I felt that I should like to put an end to the sense of wrong that there has always been between the families about Violet and her fortune. You see her father's relations always imagined they should have the custody of the child if ever anything happened to her parents, and they were very sore when she was willed, as it were, to me."

"It was a good thing for her!"

"Yes, I think it was! I may say that much without any egotism," Sir John said. "The Squire is a good fellow, and means well; but he is weak and yielding, and his wife and children rule him entirely, and Mrs. Vandaleur is not quite the sort of person to bring up a girl, according to my old-fashioned notions."

"Hardly!" and Colonel Lennox laughed, as he thought of the fast, careless household, which he had once seen when the family were in town—an event of rare occurrence—and the slangy, untidy girls, and horsey boys that composed it. "Miss Vandaleur has been fortunate in coming into your household. If I were you I would explain how matters stand, and put an end to young Vandaleur's notions of marrying her at once."

"I can't understand him!" Sir John said. "He seems to think he has a right to Violet because she is his cousin, and his letter is almost a threat. He accuses me of wanting to keep her fortune to myself, or something tantamount to it, and hints that if the young lady were allowed her own way she might be content to listen to him, and to love him, as he declares he loves her—though when the love had time to come to anything I can't imagine. Vi would have nothing to say to him when he was here."

"He is insufferably impertinent, and I should put an end to it at once," Colonel Lennox said, decisively.

He knew more of Arthur Vandaleur than he would tell his kind host, and quite understood the motives that made the young man hanker after his cousin, or rather her money-bags.

Such a match would save him from difficulties innumerable, and give him a position in society that it was his ambition to attain.

Sir John took the Colonel's advice, and wrote to Arthur Vandaleur, telling him his cousin was engaged, and thought there was an end of the matter. So there was in all outward seeming.

Mr. Vandaleur wrote back very politely to the Baronet, and something oddly to his cousin, congratulating her on her forthcoming marriage, which had been kept such a secret.

Darcie Brunton also had a letter of congratulation which puzzled him not a little, and made him remark that Arthur Vandaleur was a most polite young gentleman, though evidently something envious withal.

Violet put her letter away, hoping she should never have anything more to do with her north-country cousins, who seemed anything but agreeable; and after awhile the family returned to London for the season, and she thought no more about them.

It was hardly London that Sir John selected. He hated being cooped up in dreary streets, he said, and he took a house in Kensington, with a garden and easy access to the park and gardens.

It was not too far for the young people to have all the enjoyment of the theatres and amusements, and the chaperon he selected for them let them amuse themselves as they would, enjoying to the full the society of their respective lovers.

Society talked a good deal about the double wedding that was to take place in a very few months; it was to be the prettiest thing of the year, everyone declared.

The marrying men who were inclined to throw the handkerchief to either of the beautiful heiresses were disappointed, and the aspiring

young ladies to whom the handkerchief never seemed to come were immensely relieved to think that two such obstacles to their well-doing were removed.

Sir John had not spent a season in town for some time, and he had to select part of his establishment afresh.

Violet had no maid; she had shared Diana's attendant for some weeks through the illness of her own special maid, and Mrs. Chetwynd, the chaperon, undertook to procure her another. Various applicants presented themselves, and amongst them one to whom Violet took a wonderful fancy from the first.

She was a Frenchwoman, but speaking English perfectly, and so superior in her manner and appearance, and withal so modest and quiet in her ways, that Miss Vandeleur declared that she would have her and no other.

"We will make all inquiries, my dear," Mrs. Chetwynd replied. "I must confess I do not much like the young person, but she is to be your maid, not mine; it is for you to choose." "Take care what you are about, Vi," Miss Halliday said. "That's not a true woman, she will work you mischief somehow."

"How prejudiced you are, Di!" Violet said, "I like her so much."

"Because she is past mistress in the art of flattery child, that is all; she is plausible, but not trustworthy."

"I think you are unjust! She didn't flatter me a bit."

"Not in words, perhaps, she knew better than that; but she did with her eyes and every turn of her head and trick of her face. She is a thorough actress."

"You and I never did like the same people," was Miss Vandeleur's rather short answer. She was a spoiled child, this pretty hairdress, and liked her own way. "I mean to have Fantine if her character is all right, and she seems sure it will be. I like her very much, and she will understand my style, I am sure."

"Of course you will have your own way child, you always do; but take care. If you have that woman don't trust her, that's all; keep that little tongue of yours still, and don't gossip to her."

"Oh, Di! as if any lady ever gossiped with her maid."

"I don't!" Miss Halliday said, significantly, "but I rather think you do, little one. Keep this French woman at a distance if you engage her, and don't let her be mistress instead of servant, or she'll make you wish you had kept to my old Barbara."

Barbara had been Miss Halliday's maid all her life, and Mrs. Chetwynd held up her hands in horror when she heard that the young lady proposed to bring her to London and let her keep on with her duties in town.

"My dear, you will be a fright!" she said. "Barbara was all very well for Gillhampton and the rustics, but in London—"

"In London I shall dress myself as I have dressed in the country, and I shall keep Barbara," Miss Halliday replied, with her usual imperturbable calmness. "If I am not fit to bear comparison with the best of society, society will have to do without me. I shall make no change!"

Mrs. Chetwynd shrugged her shoulders, but she was bound to admit that Miss Halliday was right, and that the country lady's maid, in every particular, understood her duties.

Diana was as well dressed as any young lady in society, and with a certain piquancy and quaintness that very few young ladies understood or could imitate.

As to the French woman, Fantine Desmerets by name—everything was found to be correct concerning her.

She had been for some time with an elderly lady, who had nothing to say against her.

She had taken her from rather odd people, but her conduct had been exemplary during the time she had had her.

She did not mention that it was only three months, and Mrs. Chetwynd, who was rather busy that morning, and had a good many calls to make, did not waste time asking superfluous questions.

Fantine was engaged, at a liberal rate of wages, to be Miss Vandeleur's own maid.

There was something of triumph in her dark face as she walked away from the house after arranging when she could enter on her duties—not the triumph of a servant who has secured a good situation, but something deeper, as if she had succeeded in a difficult enterprise; and she did not go home to the invalid sister, whom she had put forward as a reason for her being so very anxious to get into a place at once.

But she took a cab as soon as she was out of sight of Sir John Halliday's house—a hansom—and drove straight to a house in Russell-square, and asked for the gentleman who was lodging there.

She sent up her card, and was admitted, the cab being dismissed at once.

A man rose from a lounging chair in the room which she entered, and greeted her with contemptuous familiarity.

"Well!" he said, "as you have come here, which I told you not to do, by-the-way, I suppose you have something to tell me!"

"Yes."

"What?"

"I have got the place."

"Ah! own maid to Miss Violet Vandeleur. And she likes you?"

"Yes."

"Then you may be of use! Give me an address to write to, and mind you attend to what I want, or—"

"Or what?"

"I may hint to Sir John Halliday that his ward's French maid is not altogether the sort of person to be trusted in a respectable house."

"You won't do that! Suppose I want to get back to the place I have lost. Suppose—"

"I can't suppose anything of the sort, my dear; the place you have at present will do very well for you. You need never leave it if you play your cards well."

"Do you think I am going to be a slave for ever!" the woman said, passionately. "I, your—"

"That will do," was the cool answer, spoken in a hard, freezing tone. "We have had enough of that, if you please. Do as you are bid, and—"

"And win no reward, not a kind word, not a look! It was not so once."

"Bah! That sort of thing can't last for ever," the man said, roughly. "You have had your share of spooning, Fantine; there's an end of it now."

"There shall be!" was all the woman's reply.

And she turned and left him, hailing another cab at the corner of the square, and being driven westward again.

CHAPTER V.

"It won't do, Carrington. Tell us something we can swallow, dear boy!"

"Swallow it or not as you please, it is true," and Viscount Carrington took his cigar from his mouth and let the smoke float up to the ceiling in hazy rings, "I saw her."

"You saw some one else like her."

"It was herself. I know her too well to be mistaken. There's hardly a girl in London with that wonderfully golden hair. It has gone so completely out of fashion that it is a daring thing to wear it now."

"Daring or not it is magnificent," said another man on a sofa in another corner of the room where he was almost invisibly adding to the general smokiness of the atmosphere. "I don't know when I have seen anything more perfectly lovely in the shape of woman's hair. It looks like entangled sunbeams."

"Oh, Charlton is very far gone," said the first speaker, as all the other occupants of the room laughed at the words. "He fell in love with Miss Vandeleur the very first time he saw her, and has been ready to murder Brunton ever since he knew she was already appropriated."

"I prefer the other beauty myself," Viscount Carrington said, with the air of a connoisseur in

female charms. "There's more go in her—what do you say, Trentham?"

"More go, certainly. More temper, too, I should think. Barker's Run will be nothing to the life Stafford Lennox will lead when she is his wife. She is lovely, certainly—perilously lovely, but more to my taste than the little piece of insanity, her cousin; of whom Carrington has been hatching such a story."

"I didn't hatch it!" said the Viscount, indignantly. "I heard it before—I had ocular demonstration of its truth. She must be very unsophisticated or very careless of what the world says to risk what she does."

The place was the smoking-room of the Abalanta Club, the time midnight, and the speakers young men about town, who knew the persons they were talking about right well; and it was Violet Vandeleur that they were discussing, or, rather, that they had just heard something about, which, as Mr. Trentham remarked, took a great deal of swallowing.

The London season was not many weeks old, but the two beautiful cousins had made a great sensation, and the fashionable world were raving about them as society will rave when it has nothing else to do.

Only their own good sense and Sir John's strict watchfulness saved them from becoming those most despicable creatures—fashionable beauties.

Their portraits had very nearly got into the hands of unscrupulous photographers, but the sale of them was timely stopped and an action threatened, which put an end to the attempts to see them in the shop-windows side by side with bishops and actors and women whose faces are their only fortune and whose reputations are nil.

He was old-fashioned, he declared, and had an idea that women should be sought after in their homes and not in the shop-windows, and yet for all his care and all the surveillance of Mrs. Chetwynd, the chaperon, here was Violet's name being bandied from lip to lip in the smoking-room of one of the fastest clubs in London.

He would almost have had a fit if he could have heard the assertion that Viscount Carrington had made, and in good faith, too—that Violet was playing her lover false, and meeting another man by stealth, like some uneducated servant girl.

"I am not chaffing," the Viscount said, returning to the subject in a pause of the small talk that was going on. "I'm not such a cad as to want to take away any woman's reputation, but it's the simple truth."

"I don't like to think it, for Brunton's sake," Mr. Trentham remarked, flicking the ash off the end of his cigar. "He's a good fellow! too good to be played with by a false-hearted woman and she must be that if this horrible thing is true!"

"It is true! I saw her and spoke to her."

"Spoke to her!"

"I did; I was so taken aback that I just said 'Good evening, Miss Vandeleur.' I suppose I ought to have pretended I didn't see her, but I came right upon her all at once."

"In Kensington-gardens, you said, didn't you?"

"In Kensington-gardens, not a stone's throw from Sir John's house. She had the dress on she wore at Hurlingham the other morning. It was rather a particular-looking dress, and I think it caught my eye before I knew who I was looking at. It was complete, hat and all; and her hair in that Marguerite style that she affects generally."

"You must have been looking pretty closely at her to see all that, dear boy," the young man his companion had called Charlton remarked; and Viscount Carrington said, "I suppose I was. Things strike one sometimes very forcibly, and I think all that struck me."

"And you spoke to her?"

"Just what I have told you; no more."

"And she spoke to you?"

"Well, yes; she did. She nodded and said 'Good evening.' I think she was terribly frightened at the sight of me, and yet she had not chosen any particularly retired place for her assignation."

"I don't like to hear that word in connection

with any young girl, Carrington!" Mr. Trentham said.

"I can't help thinking that the whole business was a blunder, or that if you really did see Miss Vandaleur—"

"I really did see her!"

"Then that she had some business with the person, whoever it was, that would explain it all to anyone who had any business with her affairs."

"Which I have not. I sit corrected!" the Viscount said. "Look here, Trentham, I should not have spoken of this thing if I had not heard of it before. The thing is town talk. I suspect almost everybody knows it, except Brunton himself. I could name more than one man who has seen her with the same person before."

"The person, as you call him, is a cad, whoever he is!" Mr. Trentham remarked. "I believe Violet Vandaleur to be an innocent girl, and I hope I don't know the man who is trying to lead her wrong."

"You know him! I don't know that I need make any secret of his name. It is her cousin, Arthur Vandaleur!"

"The greatest scamp unhung! If Brunton knew—"

"He'd break his neck; and serve him right!" Mr. Charlton exclaimed. "I think with you, Trentham, it is all a hideous mistake. I am sure Miss Vandaleur—"

The name died on his lips as the door opened, and the young lady's affianced husband entered the room.

Darcie Brunton was an honorary member of the Atalanta, though he was not often there. Accident took him there on this particular evening, or rather morning, for midnight had struck when he arrived, just in time to hear the name of his betrothed on the lips of the careless coterie in the smoking-room.

"Who is taking Miss Vandaleur's name in vain?" he asked. "If it is any scandal, whoever spoke it will have to answer to me!"

He spoke lightly, to all appearance, and the young Viscount was silent, leaving Mr. Trentham to answer, which he did readily enough.

"We were only on the gossip, my boy. A good many ladies have been under discussion. We were rude enough to be admiring Miss Vandaleur's 'threads of living gold,' as some poet fellow says, and to think her plucky for venturing to wear them now that bronze is all the fashion."

"Was that all?"

"That was all, and it was too much for good manners; but how could we tell that you were at the door!"

"I have only been there long enough to hear my—Miss Vandaleur's name, and to wonder what you were all doing with it."

"Nothing more than I have told you. Something too much, after all. A lady's name should be sacred in a club. But we are all friends of yours and hers, Brunton, or it would not have cropped up, I hope."

He spoke lightly, but there was a strained manner about him that did not escape the quick eye of Darcie Brunton, and somehow a silence seemed to fall on the rest of the party. One by one the men discovered that it was late and went away, leaving Trentham and the young officer alone.

"Going my way?" asked Darcie Brunton, as they also turned from the club door.

"I think not. I'm going across the park; it is the nearest for me."

"I'll stroll with you. I don't feel inclined for home yet awhile."

"As you will!"

The response was not very inviting, and Darcie Brunton looked at his friend with a darkened face.

"You don't want me, Trentham, because you don't want to be questioned," he said.

"What do you mean?"

"Just that! There was more in what you fellows were talking about than you told me. Be honest with me, Trentham, and tell me what it was those fellows were saying."

"What they were saying! You know what club-room gossip is as well as I do. What do we talk about in the smoke-room? As I said, it was

very foolish and very rude to mention any lady's name there, but—"

"Don't trifle with me, for Heaven's sake!" Captain Brunton rejoined, earnestly. "You don't know what this means to me. I come from—well, from a chaos of doubts and suspicions and the first word I hear in yonder room is the name of the woman I love something slightly spoken by a club-room coterie. Trentham, if you have one spark of feeling or honour in you, you will tell me, whom it most concerns, what those men were saying."

"Just this—the truth is best, Brunton, for it is the most harmless in the long run. Every word that passed in that room to-night amounted to this:—that Carrington saw Miss Vandaleur talking to her cousin in Kensington Gardens one evening—on my honour there was nothing more. We were commenting on Arthur Vandaleur's character, which he has contrived to conceal from Sir John, I imagine, or he would never have invited him to the Sycamores!"

"Thank you!" said Captain Brunton, huskily. "If that was all you have not heard the half that is town talk I am told. Other men are not so delicate as you are, and express their sentiments more openly. Good-night, Trentham, you are a lucky fellow."

"As bow!"

"You have not pinned your faith on a woman's truth and honour."

He had slipped away in the darkness, and was gone before his companion knew that he had left him.

Mr. Trentham uttered a low whistle as he stood looking after him in the direction he had taken.

"Then Carrington was not romancing," he said to himself; "and there is a screw loose—who'd have thought it! But there, these innocent-looking baby angels do manage to turn out something else very often. I could have staked my life on that girl's purity and truth. Whatever can she see in a lout like Arthur Vandaleur when she has Brunton at her feet. Half the women in London would be proud to marry him and this chit isn't satisfied with her good fortune, but she must go and imperil it. There will be a nice kind of row, I suspect, when the explosion comes, and I wouldn't give much for Mr. Vandaleur's peace of mind if Brunton goes near him now!"

Arthur Vandaleur was dawdling over his breakfast the next morning, skimming his daily papers, and leisurely eating and drinking of the very best—for he was a luxurious young gentleman, and liked to live well—when two letters were brought to him.

"Another of them!" he said, with a wicked smile, as he tore open the dainty-looking epistle, redolent of some subtle perfume that seemed to speak, as some things do, of the writer of the letter, and to be a part of her individuality.

He was very careful not to tear the pretty monogram on the envelope; and he looked at the contents with much satisfaction.

"Women do go the whole hog when they begin," he said to himself with a sneer. "My pretty little cousin is no exception to the rule; the letter was explicit enough."

"To-night if I can get out—and I will—under the great elm; 'the usual time and signal.'"

There was no signature, only a twisted monogram, like the one on the paper, neatly made with a pen, but the handwriting was Violet Vandaleur's, and the perfume one that she always affected.

"I'll be there, my dear!" he muttered, and tossed the letter on to a side table. "I would not disappoint little Violet for the world. She isn't always able to get away; and these stealthy meetings are rather an excitement. I feel as if I was playing at love-making again—it's a new sensation."

There was a double knock at the street door as he opened the other letter, and read that Captain Brunton would be glad of a few minutes' conversation with him.

He laughed aloud this time, and crumpled the paper in his hard, cruel hand.

"So!" he exclaimed, "the thing is blown, is it? I shall be very happy to see Captain

Brunton, and I think I have the best of it. Come in."

The door opened, and the man he had wronged so deeply appeared on the threshold.

CHAPTER VI.

THE two men faced each other for a moment without speaking, and then Arthur Vandaleur asked carelessly what had procured him the honour of the visit.

Darcie Brunton was very pale but quite calm, though he would have liked to take the man opposite to him by the throat and strangled him then and there.

He hardly believed what he had heard—he could not believe it. Violet was so young, so innocent, that it was impossible to associate her with anything mean or false; that she was meeting her cousin night after night when he, her lover, was elsewhere, and corresponding with him in lover-like fashion.

Part of this intelligence had come to him much as it had come to Mr. Trentham and the men at the club, and part in a fashion that he felt disposed to ignore—through an anonymous letter that had reached him. He could not find out how, for it had lain on his table when he went home to his room in the evening after a drive with Violet and her cousin, and no one in the place could tell how it had been placed there.

But for the horrible corroboration that had come from other quarters he would have torn it up and thrown it behind the fire or into the waste-paper basket; but it bade him ask the gentleman himself if he were not satisfied, or the lady; and he had hidden his pain from Violet and let her prattle to him as usual with all her seeming innocence in her sweet eyes, and had come straight to the person most concerned to see if the truth could be got at from him.

"I have a question to ask you, Mr. Vandaleur," he said, quietly, though his heart was beating with fearful rapidity and almost choking his utterance. "It is of vital importance to me or I should not have intruded on you at this hour, or any other."

"I am at your service," Arthur Vandaleur said; "pray be seated."

"Thank you, I prefer to stand. Is this letter true?"

He laid the paper on the table, and Arthur Vandaleur took it up and read it, keeping his face turned away from his visitor so that he should not see the expression in his eyes.

"You had better ask the lady in question," he said; "it seems to me it is for her to tell you."

"I wish to know if it is true from you, who have come between us—who, if this thing does not lie, have tempted her to do things that no modest girl would do—who have—"

"Stop, if you please, Captain Brunton; you may say things that you will regret afterwards. We will put the matter of 'temptation,' as you call it, on one side. I am sorry you have come to me about this matter, but if you must be answered, do you know your—I mean Miss Vandaleur's handwriting?"

"As well as I know my own!"

"Under the circumstances, I will do what no gentleman should—let you see a specimen or two. The letter you have just shown me is true for the most part, these anonymous writers always make the most of things. I have met my cousin now and then, and as this person says (how much time he or she must have had on hand to be able to watch us to be sure!) in what you would call secret; how were we to manage to meet otherwise?"

"Stop!" almost shouted Darcie Brunton. "Stop! or I shall—"

"Murder me! Well, two can play at that game. Don't try it, please, or you might stand a chance of being killed yourself; wait until you have seen what I promised to show you. It may be good for your belief in your own powers of fascination to see how little of the 'temptation' there has been in this business."

It was a wonder that Darcie Brunton did not choke the life out of his lying lips before he could say another word in Violet's disfavour; but he had come resolved to be calm, whether he was met with insult or anger, and he set his lips and said never a word, while Arthur Vandaleur sought amongst a heap of papers and letters and selected several.

"I need not confine myself to only one specimen," he said, carelessly. "I could show you a dozen, but these will suffice."

Darcie Brunton took what was handed to him in his hand, and looked at the notes with a dazed expression in his eyes and a feeling at his heart as if the world were slipping away from him altogether. The room seemed to swim round with him, and he staggered and felt as if he must fall.

"I must accept your invitation and sit down," he said, in a voice that he hardly recognized as his own—it was so hollow and husky. "A man does not get such a knock-down blow often; and this is a severe one."

"I am sorry it should have come to you here—perhaps, some other time—"

"A man does not prepare for an operation and lay himself on the table to say 'some other time,'" Darcie Brunton said, calmly. "So these are the evidences of the truth of the story that I hear is going the round of the clubs, are they? If these are true—"

"Of that you must be the best judge; you have known my cousin's handwriting longer than I have—at any rate, since she was old enough to manage her own correspondence. I have seen specimens of girlish penmanship said to be hers, but doubtful; they came to me professedly from her, and—"

"Don't say any more—don't speak to me! Have you no more sense than to provoke a desperate man?" Captain Brunton, said, hoarsely. "Let me look at the things in silence."

Violet's handwriting! Not a doubt of it. Her paper and envelopes, that it was her fancy to have made for her—her fanciful monogram of a bunch of violets twisted into her initials; her signature traced from it in pen and ink, and as he feebly believed, only used to him.

All were there to tell him the horrible truth that he was betrayed and forsaken even while the woman he loved—would always love, he told himself, while his life lasted—was making him believe that her love was as true as his own—was looking into his face with eyes that seemed all purity and innocence, and returning his kisses with rosy lips that were as false as the lips of Judas when he betrayed his Lord.

It was hard to believe what he read, and yet the words and familiar handwriting were there; loving words, some of them, addressed to the man who sat there, looking at him in triumphant mockery as it seemed.

Not one note, nor two, nor three; but many enough to show him that the misery that was dawning upon him had been in preparation ever since Sir John Halliday had come to London with his family; perhaps ever since Arthur Vandaleur had made his appearance at the Sycamores.

"Well!" that gentleman said presently. "Are you satisfied, or convinced I should say? Of course it is poor satisfaction to a man to know that he is set aside for some one else. I am rather glad it has come to your knowledge though. Miss Vandaleur—poor little Vi—will be pleased to think the explosion is all over, and—"

"I will wish you a good morning, Mr. Vandaleur," Darcie Brunton said, rising. "There need be no further communication between us. I congratulate you on your success with the young lady, and can only hope that when you think yourself most sure of her you may not find yourself supplanted in turn."

"I'll risk that!" was all the answer Arthur Vandaleur made to this speech, and he rang the bell for the servant to open the door to the Captain, who was already striding downstairs as if the atmosphere of the house stifled him.

"How will he take it now? What will he do?" said the gentleman he had left behind as

the street door shut after him. "Will he make a fuss and blazon the affair all over London? If he does—why, then I must. No, I don't think he is that sort of a man; I think he will keep it to himself, and let pretty Violet drop like a hot coal. We shall see."

He did see—not that day, nor the next; but the one following that he read in the evening papers,—

"An important addition to the new African expedition has been secured in the person of Captain Darcie Brunton, already well known to the public as one of the heroes of the spirited defence of Barker's Run. The gallant captain's determination to join the brave band of explorers was not made known till the very last moment, and is reported to have been brought about by domestic events of a very painful nature. Captain Brunton started for Southampton this afternoon, and will sail from that place with the rest of the party to-morrow morning early."

"So," Arthur Vandaleur said, as he read the paragraph, "he is gone, is he? and has left the field open for better men—for me, perhaps, who knows? What has he done or said, I wonder?"

Not much, as it seemed, for there was no report of anything having happened, but yet his work had been well done.

Violet had received a mysterious package—a stiff envelope of brown paper. Several letters and two or three small parcels fell out of it as she opened it with trembling hands, and a note in a sealed envelope.

She stared at the scattered papers and had no need to open them. Darcie Brunton had sent back her letters and the little presents she had given him—every one!

She understood it. The speechless things had a voice and told her she was forsaken. Why it mattered little. There was the fact; and with a gasp that was like a moan she fell forward at her cousin's feet.

They raised her and laid her on the sofa, and looked at one another in bewilderment.

"No—don't call any one," Stafford Lennox said. "She will come to herself all too soon. What does it mean?"

"She has the solution here," Diana said. "Shall I open it?"

"Yes. We may do something if there is time. I have heard a hint or two that I think I understand now. He has heard the same, doubtless. I wish I had spoken. I wish I had warned you and her; but I hate scandal, and I looked on this as nothing more. What is in that note?"

What was in it! The anonymous letter that had worked such mischief, and a few broken lines from Darcie Brunton:—

"I have seen Arthur Vandaleur, and have heard the truth from him. Heaven forgive you for my broken life, and make yours endurable. We shall never meet again!"

"I must find him," Colonel Lennox said. "There's an awful blunder somewhere, and it must be set right! Take care of her, my darling, and get her to talk to you, if you can. She may have given colour to some of it by something foolish she has done. It will all be set straight in a few days."

And so the party to Richmond never came off, and Diana was left to take her hapless cousin to her room while her lover set off post haste to seek Darcie Brunton, and bring him to reason.

CHAPTER VII.

STAFFORD LENNOX could hear nothing of Captain Brunton at his club or his chambers.

At the latter place his man said that he had orders to pack everything away and seal up his master's things. He was going away, but where he had not told him.

He was in great trouble, for it was evident the captain did not intend to take him with him, and he was much attached to his master.

"I am afraid something has happened, sir," he said. "The captain was not in bed all night. He came home yesterday morning like a man out of his senses, and all the afternoon he was shut up in his room. I was afraid of what might

happen, for I saw that he had some trouble on his mind, and I made bold to ask if there was anything that I could help in."

"And what did he say?" asked Colonel Lennox. "Did he tell you anything?"

"Nothing, sir; he only said that no one could help him. He was going to enter on a new enterprise, or something of that sort. Indeed, I don't think he very well knew what he was saying, and all night he was walking about like a madman. I fancy his leave has been shortened, and he has had to go back to the regiment again, somehow. He said I was to say he was out of town if any one came for him; and he took nothing with him but his overcoat."

"And didn't say when he should be home again?"

"No, sir."

"And you are not to join him anywhere?"

"No, sir."

"I must see him," Colonel Lennox said. "There is almost life and death depending on it!"

"I'm afraid for him, sir," the man said. "I oughtn't to speak, perhaps; but I can't help fancying that there is something about Miss Vandaleur in it. I saw him tear something he had from her one day—only a little programme or something of that sort—into a thousand shreds, and stamp on it like a man beside himself! There's some one means that young lady mischief! If he hadn't gone off so suddenly, and I could have found an opportunity, I should have made bold to tell him something."

"What is it, Trent?" the Colonel said. "You have been a faithful servant to Captain Brunton, and can keep your own counsel; and I must know anything that will help me to find him, and stop him from doing anything desperate! It has to do with Miss Vandaleur. Some one has, as you say, worked mischief. I know nothing at present, except that he is gone, and the young lady very ill. Tell me all you know."

"It isn't much, sir," Trent replied; "only this much; there was a letter brought here to my master two days ago. No one knew how at the time; but I have heard since it was given to the housekeeper's little girl in the street by a woman. I know it was something about Miss Vandaleur, for I heard what he let drop in the first anger and grief of it. He put it in his pocket, but he left the envelope; and the housekeeper knows the writing!"

"Whose is it?"

"A female Beelzebub, that's what she is, sir! a woman with as many names as faces, and all of them wicked! She hasn't a notion where she is now; but she is sure of the handwriting. She showed me some more of it."

"It is a tangled skein at present, Trent," Colonel Lennox said. "I don't know what has been said about Miss Vandaleur. I have only heard vague hints at something which I am quite sure is not true. If there is any plot against her happiness and your master's we will soon trace it. But the first thing is to bring him back, and prevent him doing anything desperate or absurd!"

It was easy to plan but not so easy to execute. The faithful Trent saw no more of his master. Darcie Brunton knew how far he could trust him, and the evening's post brought tidings of the missing man—tidings that fell like a leaden weight on their hearts. Darcie Brunton was gone, and it would be weeks, perhaps, before they could communicate with him!

All the negotiations about the African business had been conducted with secrecy and despatch. Nothing is difficult when there is a full purse; and he was away on the sea before any one knew that he intended to leave England.

Colonel Lennox told Trent he would call again in a few hours, and in the meantime if Captain Brunton returned he was to let him know at once. He should be at Sir John Halliday's in the course of a couple of hours and should remain there for some time, and then he went straight to Arthur Vandaleur's rooms and asked for him. He was denied, and was told that Mr. Vandaleur

was out of town and not likely to return for some time, the fact being that that gentleman had seen his arrival and issued his orders, having no fancy for an encounter with any one connected with his cousin just at present.

Foiled every way the colonel returned not a little dispirited to Diana and found her weeping bitterly.

Violet was very ill, and nothing could be gathered from her. She rambled in the wildest manner, and accused herself of all sorts of things which Diana was sure were only imagination.

Mrs. Chetwynd and her maid were with her, and they had sent for the doctor. They were afraid for her reason.

The doctor came and shook his head and talked about mental shocks, and prescribed a sedative, and prophesied Violet would be better soon, and went his way. And the dreary evening and night wore away, and it seemed as if the unhappy girl would go into a brain fever, till Diana took her in hand and insisted on remaining with her, and turning out the maid.

In answer to her questions when they were alone, Violet said Arthur had written to ask her to see him alone. He had something to tell her, and some letters that had been her father's to give her. He had a reason, he said, for not calling at the house, and he would not detain her long, if she would come.

He would rather she did not mention him to anyone in the place. He had given offence for which he was very sorry, and he would rather keep out of Sir John's ken till it was forgotten.

And she had met him in the gardens once, and he had given her the letters, and asked her for the loan of some money, which she had given him, and that was all; she had never seen him since—never wanted to. And how could Darcie take offence at such a trifle. What did he fancy she had done?

"It is an awful mistake, Vi!" Diana said, "or a wicked plot. He says in his note to you—Stafford and I opened it to find out, if we could, what was wrong—that he has seen Arthur Vandaleur, and—"

"But Arthur could only tell him what I have told you!" Violet said, in bewilderment. "It was only that once—not enough to come between us like this. I should have told Darcie all about it, but my cousin begged me not to. Oh! what shall I do! What shall I do! He is gone, and I shall never see him again!"

"Yes, you shall, dear!" Diana said, confidently. "You shall see him and Arthur Vandaleur, too, and all will be cleared up. Stafford will set everything right for you. There is nothing he cannot do, and Darcie will listen to me, and tell him what he has been fancying; so go to sleep, there's a good girl, and be quite ready to talk to Captain Brunton when he comes back, as he will."

When he comes back! Alas! there were miles of blue water between Captain Brunton and the shore when Diana spoke the hopeful words, and all that they saw or heard of him was two notes—one to Trent telling him what to do with the things, and enclosing a bank-note to a large amount in lieu of notice to leave, and another to Stafford Lennox, saying what he had done, and expressing a vague hope that he might never come back alive.

"He is mad!" that gentleman said, when he had read the letter.

"Never mind, Di, keep up that poor child's heart if you can; we will fathom this mystery, for there is one, and a letter will reach Brunton at Zanzibar. They will make a longish stay there to gather their forces and provisions and pick their guides. It is only a question of waiting; she will have him back thoroughly ashamed of himself I should hope, in three months, if she is patient."

"I wish I could think so," Diana said; "I cannot understand it."

CHAPTER VIII.

A MONTH passed away—two—three—and no answer came to the loving appeal Violet sent to the man who had judged her so hardly, and

the time that had been fixed for the double marriage was drawing near, and there would be no bridegroom for Violet Vandaleur.

Sir John was truly sorry for the forlorn girl, and thoroughly believed in the truth of her story. He had tried to find his nephew and got the other side of the story from him; but Arthur Vandaleur seemed to have vanished from every place where he had been known.

There was no doubt that Violet's unhappiness had been a planned affair, and Diana one day came upon ample proof that the Frenchwoman, who had been the poor girl's maid, had been a confederate in the wicked business.

It was she who had personated Violet in the meetings the world had seen and commented on—notably the one surprised by Viscount Carrington. No wonder she was discomfited and confused when the young gentleman spoke to her.

The world did not know of her relations with Arthur Vandaleur, and his power to make her do what he chose.

One day at breakfast as Violet entered the room Sir John broke the seal of a letter which he perused with a startled look on his face.

"It concerns you, my dear," he said, when he had finished it.

"Concerns me, uncle!"

"Yes, dear."

"How?"

"Arthur Vandaleur is dying, Violet."

"Dying! oh, where?"

"In a back street in Antwerp, child. This letter is from a sister of charity or something of that sort, I suspect, who is attending on him. He has met with a bad accident, and wants to see me and you."

"To see me! Oh, what for?"

"I don't know; I can only guess. Will you come?"

"Oh, yes."

In two hours from the time of the receipt of the letter Sir John and his niece were on their road to Antwerp, meeting Arthur Vandaleur's father at Harwich, en route for the same place as themselves.

(Continued on page 453.)

AS IT FELL UPON A DAY.

—30—

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was a tiny little village lying between the confines of Cheshire and a northern county of Wales where Rachel had paused in her flight from Nestville and the horror of coming in contact with Giles Hamilton.

The place was primitive beyond words; merely a scattering of cottages on a rough country with a tiny, toy-like church and a small quantity of inhabitants of the miner class.

One of the houses was called by courtesy an inn, and here it was that Rachel elected to stop for a day or two, at least, till she had matured her plans for the future.

She was a very white and haggard likeness of herself, and Lucy, her maid, was in much anxiety about her.

Rachel had taken the girl, to a certain extent, into her confidence.

"Just now you said you would go with me to the other side of the world, Lucy," she had said to the girl, with a wan smile, when her determination for flight had come to her so suddenly. "What will you do if I take you at your word?"

Lucy's face had flushed.

"I'll do [anything you want me to do, my lady," she had answered hurriedly but firmly.

Rachel had looked at her keenly, and yet with sadness.

"Well, you shall come with me. I have to go away from here, Lucy. I must go," she had added half passionately. "I want to leave immediately; we are not going back to Eaton-square. I don't

even know where we are going. I—I want to be lost, Lucy. I can't tell you everything—only this, that if I stay here I shall have great, great trouble, and I want to be a coward and run away from my trouble."

Lucy had turned her eyes away from the white quivering lips and the falling tears.

"Just give me your orders, my lady; I'm ready to go with you, and stay with you wherever you may go!"

Rachel had taken the servant's hand in hers, in her own impulsive fashion.

"I know now," she had said, with such a wistful strain of her old self, "why it is that Sylvie has always been jealous of you, Lucy, and why Miss Foster cared for you so much."

She had found Lucy the greatest help and comfort, and she had drawn a deep breath of relief as they had steamed out of the little station.

Her heart was heavy, not with mere selfish sorrow. The more she reflected on her foolishness, and saw how it reacted on others, the more Rachel grieved.

She could picture so well to herself all the phases of mental pain, through which Bastian was then passing. His trouble would be infinitely greater than her own.

She suffered, too, in her pride most terribly. She could, in her fancy, see Anne's cold condemnation of what she had done; the Castletown family's loud-voiced objections, or her uncle's amazement, could never hurt her so much as Bastian's trouble, and Anne's quiet regret.

"Oh, I was mad! mad! mad!" she said over and over again to herself, in those hours of miserable reflection in the railway carriage.

She grew worse, and more unhappy as the hours slipped away, and she was carried up northward on the first step of a journey, which her sinking heart whispered at every turn must be fruitless.

How was she to keep Giles at bay for ever? And would the horror of meeting him and perhaps arranging terms of some sort be worse than the horror of the publicity Rachel felt only too sure the man would give to the story of their marriage?

Rachel passed through every painful and agitated emotion in the hours immediately following on her flight from Nestville.

She had sent an early telegram to Bastian acquainting him, as we know, with her departure, and she determined to keep him in full information of her health, if not exactly of her movements.

The girl's tired, aching heart turned to the memory of this man's love for her as to the one and only golden gleam where all was black. And even in her thoughts of Bastian she had to restrict herself; she had to be continually setting the truth of her position before her. She was not free to dwell on the beauty of the gift he gave her; neither was she free even in her thoughts to whisper the passion of her love for him.

And she did love him with a wealth of yearning tenderness and appreciation such as Rachel had never imagined could have been possible to her.

The scales fell from her eyes in these times, and the past came before her so clearly—yet so differently.

How was it, she wondered to herself vaguely, that she had never guessed Bastian's secret in those old days?

Looking back it seemed to her now as if she had been enveloped about by his love, and his thought and care from the very first moment that the threads of their two lives had met and mingled.

When Bastian had gone away from Silchester trouble had come to her immediately. Without his tender strong hand to guard her she had at once drifted beneath the spell of a schoolgirl's infatuation for a plausible and handsome "vaurien." And had Bastian been close to her then she would never—she saw it now—never have been used so easily by her uncle as a tool in the Castletown marriage.

All through, from her babyhood almost till now, she owed all that had been sweet, and

tender, and true in her life to Bastian's love; and now it was shut away from her for ever! Now, with her own foolish little hands, she had put the greatest barrier possible in the pathway of her own happiness.

"Yes, I was mad, and I was wicked too," poor Rachel said to herself, grimly, in the long weary night hours when sleep refused to come to her aching eyes, and brain, and heart. "I was very wicked! I doubted Bastian my love, and I doubted Nell my friend! I deserve to be punished, and I am being punished. For all the wrong I have done in my life I am being punished now. I do not think an enemy, if I have one, could help being sorry for me—for I have brought my own punishment on myself, and that is the worst thing that can happen to anyone."

Lucy's anxiety deepened about her mistress as her hours passed.

It was she who really insisted on Lady Castleown coming to a temporary pause somewhere.

"You will be ill, my lady, if you don't be quiet from travelling for one day at least," she said; "and you must try and eat something, my lady, and get some sleep."

So Rachel let herself be persuaded. Questions were made and they lighted upon this little village, and this little homely inn, and the first thing Lucy did was to entice the girl to lie down and rest her racking head on the snow-white pillows of the old-fashioned bed.

A day slipped by for Rachel in a dreamy sort of way.

She was so utterly exhausted by fatigue, by incessant thought and grief, that a kind of sleepy weakness fell upon her, and for a time things became mercifully vague to her, and she accepted Lucy's care of her without any protest, and even consented to swallow some food. The value of this day of relaxed tension and of rest was forcibly illustrated during the next twenty-four hours, when Rachel was called upon to receive and sustain the most awful nervous shock.

The blow that came to her was so utterly unexpected, such a fearful surprise. Of all things she had seemed to think, but not of this; not of death—and death in such a terrible guise!

Buried as it was in the steep overhanging sides of a mountain, the little village where Rachel was lodged seemed such a tiny spot as to be set apart from the rush and turmoil of daily life. Letters were brought out but once a day, and newspapers were luxuries that were unknown. Lucy, eager to do all that her simple mind could imagine to interest and relieve her lady, had sent a messenger into the nearest town, and ordered him to bring some newspapers and illustrated journals. They had been lost to the news of the world for fully two days, and the maid hoped that Rachel would find at least a passing moment of amusement in reading.

If she could have only guessed what lay hidden in those columns of printed matter poor Lucy would have sought to keep her lady in utter ignorance all the days of life! But the tragedy that lay ahead had to be acted out, and Rachel's part in this fateful drama had to be played to the end. So Lucy's messenger went cheerfully to fulfil his errand, and as evening dusk was stealing over the glory of a superb sunset, he came trudging back with the papers under his arm, in which were printed in clear large letters the news of Giles Hamilton's sudden death, and the arrest of his murderer, Sebastian Lithgow.

It can be better imagined than described the condition of horror, amazement, and excitement that fell upon Silchester when the full news became known.

The inhabitants seemed stunned with surprise, and every voice was hushed to a whisper as they spoke of the tragedy that had befallen the "young master" of Corby Court, and the even worse tragedy that now rested upon the Rectory and its inmates.

The prevalent, the first, and the lasting feeling where Sebastian was concerned in the matter was one of amazement that such a charge could be brought against him, and also one of

convincing belief that some hideous blunder had been made by the authorities.

But brave as this loyalty was, even the Silchester people, who knew Bastian so well, were troubled and staggered as the hours slipped by, and the second day after the murder drew to a close. Gossip needs no carriage, it flies swifter than any bird, and long before the London evening papers were brought down by train and eagerly sought by the agitated people it became known that a witness had volunteered evidence against Mr. Lithgow, evidence which, though not of direct value as bearing upon the actual deed, yet was of the greatest circumstantial weight, proving as it did that there had existed a powerful ill-feeling between the dead man and the man who stood charged with his murder, and that the hatred on Bastian's side had been so strong that he had openly expressed a desire to see Giles Hamilton lying dead at his feet!

This witness was the waiter from the hotel at Nestville, and the whole of the evidence he had to give at the coroner's inquest was considered of the most ominous description by all who stood on the accused man's side. In the Rectory a shadow as deep as death itself rested upon each person of the household.

The shock, indeed, had acted as a physical illness to the Rector. He had suddenly lost his plump sententious air, he seemed to shrivel into a prematurely aged man. The publicity, the downfall of his position, was far worse for such a spirit as his to bear than the actual tragedy itself.

When Anne had recovered from her short spell of unconsciousness she seemed to know all that lay before her.

She needed no words, no visit of the county magistrate and officials to tell her the truth. She had guessed it instantly when her uncle had first given her the news of the tragedy, and her eyes had rested on Bastian standing in the doorway of her home.

Only for one brief moment did Anne Huntley's brave woman heart faint beneath the weighty burden laid upon it.

Swiftly she threw aside her weakness, and took her place beside the man she had loved, but who had never loved her. Bastian, like herself, had instantly gathered the awful translation of his acts that would be forced home to him.

He winced at first, as what man of his honour would not have done! But he almost immediately became calm and resigned.

When he was conscious of such supreme innocence himself it was of course impossible for him to do aught but smile at the most tremendous of circumstantial evidence that could be produced against him. He knew enough of English law and people to realise that despite his absolute innocence he stood in a position of extreme danger; but this did not shake his calmness.

The fact that Giles Hamilton was dead, a painful fact to Bastian to remember, for great as had been his horror to the man he had never (save in that one moment when passion had swept a sort of madness through him) desired definite ill to Rachel's enemy.

The fact that the child he loved was now set free was robbed of its every significance and delight when he was forced to remember in what way this freedom had come.

He thought of her unceasingly; he put her and his mother together in his thoughts.

When the moment came, and he was called upon to hold himself in a sense a prisoner, he spoke a few words to Anne.

"Be brave, dear," he said, in his gentlest way; "this is only a bad dream. It will pass, no need to tell you of my innocence, you know it. I leave them both in your hands, Anne. The child will come here direct when she sees what has happened. Guard her and my mother. You know your duty, never let their courage fail; all will go well."

Anne clasped his hand in silence.

She could not speak, her lips seemed frozen; but in her heart there was a rush of hot life mingled in with acute self-reproach.

She knew by his voice, his words, his eyes, that he had not done this dreadful thing; yet for one brief moment she had doubted him!

Anne would strive to make atonement for that doubt all the years of her life.

She watched him drive away from the house with hot tearless eyes, and also looked bravely into the pale faces of the servants who were clustered together in the hall.

"It is some dreadful mistake," she said, turning to them, and speaking quite calmly; "you, who have known Mr. Bastian all these many years, do not need me to say this to you; but I do say it, for it is so easy for us to be led away by appearances sometimes. Though everything may seem to be against him you will none of you doubt him for—it was here that Anne's voice broke—"for he is incapable of any such wrong."

It needed a heart with all Anne's strength and courage to face the immediate duty that lay to her hands.

She trembled most of all for the mother. With Rachel the grief and the horror would be passing words; but even with her they would not fall so heavily as they must upon Marian Langridge.

Anne never remembered how she had managed to put the story of what had happened before her aunt. She clothed it as gently as she could, and if it had been possible she would have done her best to keep Mr. Langridge in utter ignorance.

This being quite out of the question Anne did the next best thing. She roused her aunt to some anxiety about the Rector, and left all the care of him to the poor lady, who was almost too bewildered to understand the full import of the trouble that had fallen upon them.

The rector's collapse made demands upon his wife for which Anne was most thankful, and true to that wonderful courage that is instilled somewhere in the nature of every woman, Mrs. Langridge put aside her own weakness and nervousness and even her anguish itself to minister to her husband.

For Anne there were sterner duties. She had to be the man; to interview, to arrange, to take upon her shoulders everything that could be of importance to help in this crisis.

She had a helpful coadjutor in John Foster, who, summoned to attend to the burial of his child, was brought face with the double grief of knowing his beloved employer was in great danger.

Anne never could have achieved half she did, if she had not had Foster to help her.

She more than once urged him to spare himself for his sorrow over his girl's untimely death was very great, but there was only one answer to this—

"My Nell is dead and needs no help now, Heaven rest her soul!" the father said to Anne. "She will be laid in her grave, and nothing will remain but her memory. But Mr. Bastian is alive and has need of me. Shall I forsake him now when he has need of all his friends?"

On the third day after the murder poor Eleanor Foster was carried to a resting-place in the village churchyard.

The Rector was too ill to attend the funeral, but Anne followed the coffin closely on foot, walking besides the sorrowing father, and the burial service was read by a clergyman from a neighbouring parish, an earnest hard-working man, whom Anne had known for years, and for whom she held the greatest respect.

The entire village seemed to follow poor Eleanor's coffin, and when the grave was left it was heaped with flowers of every kind brought thither by the hands of those who mourned her.

It was on the evening of this day that Rachel arrived at Silchester. She came at nightfall, and she walked hurriedly through the village with Lucy, shrinking visibly from all glances that were turned on her.

Anne was sitting in the library with John Foster when Rachel reached the house.

The sisters stood looking into one another's eyes for a moment in silence; then Anne opened her arms, and with a sobbing cry Rachel was folded in her embrace.

The suffering Rachel was enduring had blotted out her beauty and her youth.

She looked a worn woman, with strained tear-

stained eyes and a mouth that was contracted as with pain.

As John Foster moved out of the room she looked her query about him.

"He came for poor Nell's funeral; she died the very same night. You did not know it, darling, but do not grieve for her, she is at rest now poor child."

Rachel pushed her cloak from her shoulders, and threw her hat and veil from her.

"Anne," she said, hoarsely, "I must see him. Where is he? I must see him. I must!"

Anne stood beside her smoothing her hot brow.

"Dear, you shall see him to-morrow—it is too late to-night."

"It is always too late," Rachel cried, with passionate intensity. Then thoughts of herself went from her a little, as she looked at her sister. She put out her small trembling hand and touched Anne's.

"It is all through me," she whispered, "all my fault. If—if it had not been for me he would never have gone to Corby! Never—"

She could not finish her sentence, she could only lean her head against Anne's heart and weep silently.

They were standing in this embrace when John Foster came back to them. It was wonderful how quickly both the girls seemed to cling to him as one who would take away this trouble from their lives. He had quietly stepped into the place of Bastian himself, and all he did he did from deep affection and gratitude.

The news of Nell's death did not seem strange or surprising to Rachel, but it made the burden of her grief heavier, for she saw in this the working out of her miserable folly also. It was a gleam of comfort to see that John Foster had never had a glimmer of suspicion that anything had been wrong in his girl's life. He mourned for her as one who had died untimely, but he saw nothing beyond this, and both Anne and Rachel prayed earnestly that he might never know.

They sat late into that night talking over everything. The finest legal advice was to be brought forward to support Bastian. No stone would be left unturned that could in the smallest way help him, but against themselves—against their loyal love and eager hope, the hearts of the three were cold and heavy with fear, for each step forward but served to force home the horrible importance of the circumstantial evidence heaped up against Sebastian Lithgow.

"He did not do it," John Foster reiterated again and again.

"He could not do such a thing," Anne said, firmly to herself and to others.

"He would have died himself rather than bring death to another human creature!" was Rachel's passionate assurance.

And with these sentiments there ran a great number equally loyal from those outside. Yet the evidence all pointed to the fact that Giles Hamilton had been shot dead by Bastian Lithgow.

How were they to challenge this evidence and prove its worthlessness?

CHAPTER XXXII.

It need scarcely be said here that Bastian's one greatest wish about the unfortunate position in which he found himself placed was the desire to preserve the story of Rachel's marriage with Hamilton a secret as far as it was possible to be so kept.

The inquest was over, and the verdict attributing the death to murder, and implicating him in the charge, had taken place on the day of Eleanor Foster's funeral. Bastian was practically committed for trial, bail being absolutely disallowed.

The inquiry so far, however, had dealt with facts as they had happened, and no one had attempted to probe into the reasons that had caused the ill-feeling (so paramount a feature

against Bastian) between the living and the dead man.

It was Bastian's desire that this reason should remain undisclosed.

He could not endure that the story of his child's folly should be blazoned through the newspapers, and he said as much to the eminent counsel who came to him to get all the help they could from him for his defence. To this barrister, a personal friend, he told the truth.

"Keep it suppressed," he said, with entreaty in his voice, "for Heaven's sake keep it secret if you can. No good purpose can be served by telling this story. It can neither help nor harm me!"

The counsel was gravely perturbed.

"You are wrong, Lithgow," he said, when he had listened to all; "this can help and harm you both—but I fear there will be no possibility of keeping it secret. The marriage was performed at a registry office, you tell me, I should not be surprised if already the facts had not been supplied by this office to some enterprising newspaper. Moreover, Lady Castletown's position as regards the dead man and his property must be taken into consideration. She is his widow, remember, and—"

But Bastian hushed him to silence with a gesture.

"I may be allowed an interview with Lady Castletown?" he asked, after a moment's silence, and he sat with his eyes covered by his hands after his counsel had replied in the affirmative. "I want to spare her—to spare her all I can—you understand," he said, breaking a long pause.

And the counsel nodded his head; he understood perfectly.

It was he who brought Rachel to the interview, he turned away as he saw them standing, hand clinging to hand.

"Bastian! oh! my love! my love!" Rachel moaned as she drew his hands up and pressed them to her heart.

Bastian's eyes were dimmed with tears as he looked at her. Was this his little love Rachel, his brilliant, laughing, happy child? Where was her beauty now? Her eyes were sunken, her face tear-stained and white, she pierced his heart with her lost loveliness.

"Child!" he said hoarsely, "don't take my strength from me—I need it all. Everything will come right, Rachel, my heart. I do not speak this emptily—I feel—I know all will come right!"

Rachel still held his hands.

"Oh! what I suffer," she said, "to see you here—to look at your poor mother—and at Anne—and to know—"

He stopped her.

"Hush!" he said gently, "there is no blame with you, Rachel. For all that has come to me now—I blame myself—I acted wildly, and I am suffering in consequence. It—it is a lesson to us both, Rachel."

She knelt beside him as he sank into a chair, she leaned her aching head against his arm.

"Oh! Bastian, if I might die now—with your arms round me!" she said, with a sigh of infinite weariness.

Bastian held her closely to him.

"Do not speak like this sweetheart," he said, chiding her tenderly, "death has been too busy of late. Rachel, we must think of that dead man in our prayers! How awful to be swept to eternity so unprepared. Poor Eleanor she was surely avenged for the—"

Rachel suddenly pushed herself from his hold and got on to her feet. Her face had changed, it thrilled now with a nervous excitement.

"Bastian! Bastian!" she said in a whisper, "you have found out the truth. It was for Eleanor's sake that this was done. Oh! do you not see—do you not understand! Her wrong was avenged by his death. Why have we not thought of this before?"

Bastian got on his feet too, her excitement had communicated itself to him.

"Rachel, what are you saying! Do not

delude yourself, my dear one—do not let wild hopes or thoughts come."

Rachel quieted herself.

"It is not wildness, nor delusion, Bastian," she answered, "it is the truth. It has come to me all at once, and I feel it is the truth. It was no chance, no thief, or poacher's shot that sent Giles to his death, as your counsel would have you urge in your defence. It was a deliberate murder—it was a revenge for the wrong done to poor Nell!"

She was quivering with excitement now, she could hardly stand; she sank her voice into a whisper when she spoke next.

"Philip Robinson has disappeared. He has not been at the office, so Mr. Foster says, for several days. We have all imagined it was grief over poor Eleanor's death that has kept him away—but now—now—"

Bastian took her into his arms.

"My love!" he said, with exquisite tenderness, "do not let cruel doubt or false hope creep into your thoughts. Philip was utterly ignorant of poor Eleanor's true story. Giles Hamilton was no more to him than any other man in the world. That he has disappeared does not surprise me, for of late I have noticed a sad change in the poor fellow, and I expect the news of Eleanor's death has for a time taken all power of restraint from him. He is not an ordinary nature, and he loved Eleanor in no ordinary way; her death therefore will be mourned by him in no conventional spirit. Remember, my dear love," Bastian said sadly, and he kissed her softly as he spoke, "remember how once before you let doubt grow on your imagination, and—"

"Oh! hush! hush!" Rachel said, breathlessly. It was so true.

Once before had not her doubt driven her to utter recklessness?

She lay passive in his arms, finding a vague touch of happiness in his near presence, even though the anguish was so great, till the moment came for the interview to end, and then she went slowly from him.

The barrister, in whom all her hope was now laid, took her down to her carriage.

As she was passing in Rachel turned.

"Mr. Gregory," she said, with a sudden impulse, "before you proceed any further in your defence have a search made for one of Mr. Lithgow's clerks, Philip Robinson by name. He has disappeared from the office for several days, and," Rachel's lips quivered, "and I think he could perhaps throw some light on this awful business."

The man beside her quickly jotted down all she said.

"We must leave no stone unturned, Lady Castletown," he said, earnestly. "I will be quite frank with you. The evidence against him is terribly strong. He has told me all there is to be told, and you yourself will see the motive that the other side will immediately urge when all is known!"

Rachel shivered.

"Oh, yes; I see it—I see it!" she cried with anguish. Then she recovered herself as much as she could. "Find Philip Robinson," she repeated, and with that she got into the carriage and was driven away.

The excitement, the mystery and the interest in the Corby Court murder case grew deeper as the days passed. Rachel found herself in the unenviable position of being the heroine of the case.

As the barrister had said to Bastian, the story of her connection with Giles Hamilton quickly leaked out, and Silchester was overrun with newspaper reporters who were anxious to obtain sight of, if not an interview with, the young Lady Castletown who had contracted a second marriage so romantically and so disastrously.

The funeral of Giles Hamilton was kept very quiet, only such members of his family who were in England attending, and his coffin was laid beside his mother's in the Corby vault. His wealth passed by law to Rachel as his widow, but she wrote one brief note to the Hamilton lawyers, and asserted that no power on earth



RACHEL DREW NEAR AND SAW THE BODY OF A MAN LYING HALF IN AND HALF OUT OF THE WATER.

would permit her to touch a farthing of such money.

It might pass to whom they liked, and if her legal repudiation of it were needed she would make a deed of gift to such member of the family as would take it.

It was a strange changed Rachel who lived at the Rectory these sad days. She seemed impervious to curiosity, or to all of the horrors connected with her share in this case.

Closely shrouded in a thick veil she went out into the village each day to prosecute the line of inquiry she had marked out for herself.

It was immaterial to her that her every action was noted.

She had something so proud and dignified about her that few strangers ventured to accost her.

When Anne would have remonstrated and have urged her to remain indoors Rachel had but one response.

"If you want me, I will stay, dear; but the invalids are better without me, and I must go on with my search!"

Anne always sighed when she heard this.

"It is a myth, dearest," she said earnestly many times; "had Philip Robinson been in Silchester that night we should have heard of it."

"We have heard of it," Rachel would say in reply. "Do not forget that there is one person who saw a dark strange man talking to poor Eleanor at Mrs. Hughes's garden-gate that night she was found dead. I know you are going to say that this witness is only a child, and may have made a mistake; but I am sure she has made no mistake, Anne. I am sure Philip came to see Eleanor that night. She had had some sudden shock, you tell me. It was he who gave her this shock. I mean to search till I find some trace of him, for he, and he alone, can clear Bastian of this awful charge."

And so she would continue her search. She let no one know save Anne and Bastian's counsel what task it was she had set herself.

She went to work almost cunningly.

She drove round and about for miles, and here and there she would stop and question, but never a clue to Philip Robinson's having been anywhere near could she discover.

"He will come to Eleanor's grave," she then said to herself, and she went each day to the little village churchyard, but always without any success.

The small girl, who was her witness, stuck to her story.

She had seen Miss Foster standing by herself looking over the garden gate, and then she had seen a strange man, who was very dark, standing beside the gate also, talking to Miss Foster.

It was on this one point that Rachel founded all her hope.

The time went by too fleetly; in another week the trial would be opened against Bastian; her heart died within her as she remembered it, and thought of his worn face, and his mother's broken-hearted eyes.

"Oh! he must be found—he must be found," she cried wildly, to herself, as she thought of Philip, and the impulse of her desire urged her forth again to make another pilgrimage that was always so hopeless.

Her path lay on one occasion just four days before the trial towards a common, which stretched between Stradbury and the neighbouring town.

She had driven over this common several times, but it had no houses, or no people from whom she could get information.

To-day she was walking and Bobby was with her, running eagerly about, sniffing the fresh air, and barking with delight.

He always accompanied Rachel on her walks, and he was overjoyed to get on to the common, where he could scamper about to his heart's content.

Rachel watched him rush away with an envious heart.

"Oh, to be free like that," she said to herself wearily, "to have the old freedom back again—

to know one hour of peaceful thought. Oh! my love, to know that you were safe!"

Sighs came from her lips like sobs.

Away in the distance, Bobby was barking wildly; he had reached the big pond, and he was in a state of excitement.

Rachel roused herself to whistle to him: she remembered hearing from Bastian that this piece of water was dangerous, there was such a thick growth of weeds that a small dog like Bobby could be easily entangled and perhaps drowned. She broke into a run at this thought.

"Bobby—Bobby!" she called.

But Bobby continued to bark and to growl, as irritated by something.

Rachel was relieved to see he had not plunged into the water; she whistled to him as she ran.

All at once she paused.

She could see clearly now. Bobby was barking round a dark undistinguishable mass. It looked like a human body.

Rachel drew back with a shudder; then she forced herself on, and in another moment she had drawn near enough to see that it was the body of a man lying half in and half out of the water—the face was hidden from her, nor would it have been possible to have looked upon it, but Rachel's horror and natural repugnance went from her suddenly.

She knew without further proof that the man she had sought for so eagerly was found and lost even in the finding, for Philip Robinson, the one creature she believed who could save Bastian, lay dead at her feet!

(To be continued.)

THE humming-bird is so called from the sound made by its wings. It is only found in America, and is said to frequent California more than any other State. It cannot be kept in cages, for it is not adapted to endure confinement, and if imprisoned, it usually dies in two or three months.



TO HIS OWN DELIGHT SIR DENIS TOOK LADY LESTER IN TO SUPPER.

BERYL'S MARRIAGE.

CHAPTER V.

THE first person Sir Denis Adair met on his return to London was Dick Chesney, with a broad mourning band on his hat, and rather a subdued expression on his handsome face.

The mourning band was for his wife; the excuse he had invented for leaving Broadgate was only an anticipation of the truth, for when he looked in at his club he found a note from his wife's companion informing him of Mrs. Chesney's serious illness, and urging him to go to Brighton at once.

The note had been lying unheeded for over a week, and when Dick reached the very select boarding-house where his wife had lived since their separation, it was to find the summons had been no false alarm, and she had departed this life three days before.

Her lawyer had made all necessary arrangements for the funeral, and the bereaved husband had only to equip himself becomingly for the melancholy occasion and follow as chief mourner.

"Why, Dick," cried Denis Adair, who had a great liking for his prodigal friend, "I do believe you were going to cut me; come and lunch with me, old chap, and let's exchange yarns of what we've been doing lately."

Dick drew a breath of relief; he had almost expected Sir Denis to decline his further acquaintance, for he never doubted the Dents would have enlightened the baronet as to his character, and he knew quite well that Adair—himself the soul of honour—would never look over the forged promissory note or again be intimate with its author; from the friendly greeting he came to the conclusion that Joseph Dent had held his tongue, and was much relieved.

He followed Denis into the latter's club and a very cosy lunch was soon ordered, but Adair noticed that Dick was unusually grave, and had quite lost his old careless manner.

"What on earth's the matter, man?" he said at last when even a bottle of choice champagne failed to raise Dick's spirits. "You look as if you were at a funeral."

"I've been to one lately," said Dick Chesney, with something like a groan.

It flashed upon Adair then that he was in mourning, and remembering his reason for leaving Broadgate, it was easy to guess what had happened, what was not easy was to account for the fact of his wife's death affecting his spirits.

They had lived apart for years, and it was an open secret that the marriage had been entered into by Dick simply for mercenary motives.

"You don't mean to say that Mrs. Chesney's illness ended fatally?" asked Adair.

"She was dead when I got there; that hateful letter was a week old, you see, and I only got to Brighton three days too late."

"Poor woman," said Denis Adair, feelingly; "it must have been hard on her."

"It was hard on me," said Dick mournfully, "denied hard. The lawyer came to make her will; she'd always put that business off believing it would hasten her death; if you'll believe me, Adair, she took it into her head that I was staying away wilfully, that I had had the summons and refused to go to her. She cut me off with a beggarly fifty pounds, and left the whole of her property between her first husband's two cousins."

"Was it much?" asked Denis Adair, rather inconsequently.

"A good bit; it brought in just a thousand a year. Why if she'd only left me the income for my life and the principal for those girls when I died it would have been something."

"To be sure it would. I suppose," rather awkwardly, "the will must stand. You'd have no chance if you disputed it."

"That's what I asked the lawyer, and I can't say he was encouraging. First he declared it was a perfectly just will, since the whole property came from the Jecks' side, and these girls were old Jeck's next of kin; then he informed me my

wife hadn't set eyes on them or held any correspondence with them for over twenty years, so that a charge of undue influence would not lie, and he wound up by saying as the whole world knew our marriage was a failure it was perfectly natural Mrs. Chesney should not trouble herself about my future."

"I daresay that's good law, and perhaps he's wise to advise you not to dispute the will if you'd have no chance of success, but what in the world will you do?"

"I don't know," and the unwonted gravity of Dick's speech much impressed Sir Denis. "Go under, I suppose; I don't see much else for it."

"Oh, come, that's nonsense," said Adair practically. "You must be able to get a billet of some sort, a clever good-looking fellow like you. It may be a little hard to weather the storm till you do get it, but it'll be right enough then."

But the widower shook his head and refused to be comforted.

"I'm not given to despond," he said frankly, "but I can't think of any particular work I'm fitted for. Professions are out of the question, the training takes too long and costs too much. I suppose I could be a clerk or an usher without any particular qualification, but I'd rather put a bullet through my brains than sit on an office stool from nine till six, and I detest the whole race of boys too much to wish to spend my life in instructing them."

"Couldn't some of your relations put you into a good thing?" suggested Adair. "Your family is of old standing in Derbyshire, and—"

Clearly the Dents had not "given him away." Dick felt a little more hopeful.

"To tell you the truth, old man, I've no claim whatever on the Derbyshire Chesneys; I'm not so much as their sixteenth cousin. My father was a self-made man. He kept a small grocer's shop at the beginning of his career. Then he patented an article of great domestic use. It 'caught on.' He made a pile, and set up for a gentleman, marrying a young girl on the strength of it. My late lamented wife had a great weak-

ness for blue blood and a pedigree. It pleased her to think I was one of the Derbyshire Chesneys (they count their descent back to the time of the Conquest, I think), and as it didn't hurt anyone else particularly I let her have her way."

Sir Denis smiled. "And I've heard your resemblance to Lord Chesney mentioned a dozen times. It's a strange world, Dick. I don't suppose a creature has ever suspected you did not belong to the Derbyshire family."

"The likeness, of course, was pure imagination," said Dick, smiling, "and for the rest the British public are very credulous."

Sir Denis was honestly concerned for his friend. He was a proud man, and the fact of the grocer's shop was rather a blow to him still. Dick had confessed it himself, which took the sting out of the discovery, and he was anxious to help him.

"If your father made his pile I suppose he left it to someone. If you offended him and he disinherited you you would still have a strong claim on the person who inherited his property."

"That person has probably never heard of my existence. My father left all he had to my half-brother. He died young, and the family is represented by a slip of a girl. She lives under the care of guardians, and is a very grand and important person. Do you think they'd let her help a step-uncle who was down on his luck? Not they. Why her guardian quarrelled with me five years ago for the merest trifle, and forbid me ever to enter his house again. Of course I understood it. He was afraid when the heiress was of age I should make some claim on her generosity. He's a successful man himself, and so has no feeling for people who fail to get on. There's no crime so great to rich folks as poverty."

"Look here, Dick," said Denis Adair, "if you tell me honestly what you're fit for I'll try and get you a post somewhere. I know a good many influential people, and it's easy enough to ask favours when they are not for one's self."

Dick Chesney hesitated.

"I think my social accomplishments are my best card, Adair. If I could get hold of some oldish couple who wanted to get into society I believe I should be invaluable to them. I know the ropes you see. I could make their parties a success. Tell them the right people to invite, and so on. Then I'm a first-rate talker, and can sing drawing-room ballads with anyone. If my employers lived in the country I could manage their stables and see that their people didn't rob them. If you could help me to a thing of that sort, Adair, I'd promise you to act square by your friends. I'd even pledge myself not to flirt with their daughters. As for salary, a hundred a year for dress and pocket-money would be accepted. They might call me their Private Secretary. I really am good at letters and accounts."

Sir Denis Adair laughed outright. He himself would have preferred the hardest drudgery in the world, and independence, to the position sketched by Dick; but it so happened he knew of someone wanting just the services Mr. Chesney desired to offer.

"Have you ever heard me speak of the Blakes?" he asked, with a touch of sadness in his voice.

"Let me see—ain't it Blake who holds the mortgage on Heron Dyke?"

"Yes; and who will probably some day be master of my home. He's not a bad sort of fellow. Honest as the day, and thoroughly good-hearted, but he's risen from the ranks—he made his money in cotton. Now he is rather richer than anyone else I know, and yet never seems to get much pleasure out of his money. He has two daughters, who must be his co-heiresses, but as they are only fifteen at present they wouldn't be in any danger of falling in love with your handsome self. Once upon a time, Blake (we're very friendly, though I do owe him twenty thousand pounds) made me a funny sort of offer; he wanted me to live with him for a year or two and 'show him the ropes,' that was how he put it, but I imagine he means much the same as you do. He offered me a suite of rooms, a salary, and a hunter. Well, I couldn't do it;

I'd rather starve on a crust in an attic, and I told him so frankly. If he is still in the same mind shall I recommend you? If the arrangement only lasted a few months it might tide you over an awkward time."

"I should think so, indeed," said Dick, warily. "If you'll get me the berth, Adair, I shall be grateful to you all my days. He wouldn't think me such a valuable acquisition as you, because I have no title, so you may cut off the hunter. I only want to be treated as one of the family, and to have a salary of not less than a hundred a year."

"Blake's up in town, and I have to see him to-morrow on business; I'll mention it then. I shall not tell him of the grocer's shop, Dick—it might spoil the whole thing."

"And I really don't look as if I had dealt out treacle and paraffin oil," said Dick. "Besides, the shop was before my time; the old man had given it up long before he met my mother, so I'm quite out of it. Oh! by the way, Adair, there's one ray of light in my gloomy sky; my wife's lawyer admits that the Jacks girls (I haven't been heard of since their uncle's funeral (twenty-five years ago). They were very angry at not being mentioned in his will, and dropped all correspondence with his widow. It's odd how the tables are turned, isn't it?"

"Very; but I don't see your ray of light."

"Oh!" said Dick with supreme selfishness, "don't you see they may be dead; if they died before my wife of course the bequest would lapse to her natural heir—myself."

Sir Denis did not feel at all sure of his friend's law, though his wishes were very plain; he only said rather coldly,—

"They may have left children."

"Let's hope they died unmarried," said Dick, cheerfully. "Denis, I do believe I could become a respectable member of society if I had a thousand a year."

"You'd immediately begin to want ten thousand," was the quick retort.

"Well, perhaps you're right. Now, that's enough about my worthless self. Now let me hear what you have been doing all this time. You have quite recovered from that terrible night at Broadgate? But I can see that for myself."

"Oh, that was a mere question of feeling shaken and having my hands useless for a few days, nothing to hurt."

"And the young lady—was she very grateful? I am sure she looked lovely enough to melt the hardest heart. I only saw her when she was unconscious; but I thought her very beautiful. Who was she, by the way?"

"Miss Dent; her family are City people who live near Clapton."

"Ah!" and Mr. Chesney felt much relieved. "Then you are not likely to pursue the acquaintance any further. Do you know, Adair, I wove quite a little romance about that affair. The girl was so beautiful, and it would have been so natural for you to marry the woman for whom you risked your life."

"Rubbish!" said Adair, irritably. "Look here, Chesney, plain-speaking's best. That young lady has passed out of my life; I am never likely to see her again, and I don't choose to discuss her with you or anyone else."

"Right," said Dick, who certainly took snubs with imperturbable good humour. "I say, Adair, if you see the worthy Mr. Blake to-morrow, will you let me know the result of your recommendation as soon as you can?"

"I'll write at once," said Denis, cordially, and then they parted, Mr. Chesney going to play a game of billiards with a callow youth from whom he hoped to win a few sovereigns, and Denis Adair strolled into the reading-room of the British Museum, rather out of humour with himself and things in general.

He loved Beryl. Oh, if he had ever doubted it the few days of their separation had taught him his own secret completely. He could never again be the careless, heart-whole young man about town he had been before that night at Broadgate. Between him and his amusements there rose ever the memory of a girl's face framed in chestnut hair, and set with violet

eyes as dark and velvety as two purple panacea. They were both in London, only a few miles divided them. Half an hour in the train, a short drive, and he could have stood once more in the presence of the only woman he could ever love.

He longed to see her again, he yearned just for the sound of her voice, but he crushed his desires and longings down with a ruthless hand. He had no right to draw Beryl into poverty—he owed it to his future children—if Heaven sent him any—that they should be Adaïrs of Heron Dyke, sons and daughters of an honoured county family, not the offspring of a man who had sacrificed home and prospects for love, and was too poor even to bear his title.

It must be one of two things (alas, Beryl and love were not included in the alternatives), either he must conquer this mad passion which possessed him, and stifling all thought of Beryl, marry a partner who could pay off the mortgage on Heron Dyke and restore the beautiful old mansion to its former glory, or he must live unmarried and let the old name die out with him.

Mr. Blake was a very favourable specimen of a *parvenu*. He was vulgar, hopelessly so, indeed; but he was not purse proud. He was very glad he had made a fortune himself; but he did not look down on everyone who had not.

It was the one flaw in his successful career that he had no son. His only boy (many years older than the twins) had died at the age of twenty, and it was a fancy of the father's that Denis Adair resembled what George might have been had he lived to reach thirty.

This fancy (which he kept a profound secret from everyone except his wife) made him not only interested in the young Baronet, but most anxious to do all in his power for him, and if only Denis had been willing Mr. Blake had conceived a very simple plan for his favourite's advancement.

If the Baronet passed his word to marry the elder of those plain awkward-looking twins Mr. Blake would have given him a discharge in full of all his liabilities, and also made Adair his sole heiress, with the exception of a very moderate provision for her mother and sister.

Denis knew perfectly what was in Mr. Blake's mind, and felt that so long as he was unmarried the rich manufacturer would never foreclose, even if the interest on the mortgage fell heavily into arrears, while the announcement of his engagement would be such a bitter pill to Mr. Blake that he would at once be changed into a relentless creditor.

The British Museum was a favourite resort of Denis Adair's. He had obtained a ticket for the reading-room some years before when such tickets were granted for life, and did not need—as is the present custom—to be renewed annually. It was the only place where he felt secure from interruption when he wanted to be undisturbed. He could "think" far better in that spacious apartment, however great the number of strangers present, than in his own rooms, where, even if alone, he was liable at any moment to be intruded on. He was what is termed "a popular man," and had hosts of acquaintances; but he showed to none of them his real self.

At the reading-room to day he first consulted a work of reference. He wrote occasional articles on political celebrities of the past, for which he was well paid, and most of his MSS. were written in the precincts of the reading-room.

But to-day his thoughts would not move quickly, his ideas refused to flow, and at last he gave up the effort, replaced his roll of paper in his pocket, and bent over a book, trying to take in the information it contained, though he had failed to be able to reproduce it.

But his mind wandered continually from the page; the wildest trifles distracted him. There was a girl, for instance, opposite him, who had hair just the shade of Beryl Dent's. She bore no other resemblance to Denis Adair's love; indeed, she was plain and under-sized, her dress faded and shabby, and altogether too thin for the bleak October day. Still just the fact of her having that beautiful sunny hair had turned Denis's thoughts towards her, and he could not immediately recall them.

How very ill she looked, and how fast she was

writing, copying extracts from a bulky tome into a neat MS. book with ease and rapidity many clerks would have envied. Probably she was working for others.

Denis knew many authors employed people to "hunt up" information for them from valuable works in the Museum; doubtless that was what she was doing.

He wished she had not had that sunny hair. It made him think of Beryl. What a dreadful thing it would be if Beryl had to sit at that table opposite copying as though for dear life in order to earn her daily bread.

Supposing she offended the Dents. They seemed fond enough of her; but people have turned against orphan girls dependent on them before now.

Suppose they left her to shift for herself, and she learned what poverty meant, working till she grew as pale and thin as the girl before him.

The idea was horrible to him; he could not get it out of his head. The girl coughed now and then that weary little hacking cough which comes more from sheer weakness than from actual disease.

Denis was glad when she collected her things, returned the volume, and walked towards the door.

But she never reached it. With a strange swaying movement she bent forwards and would have fallen, only Denis, who somehow had half-expected something of the kind, caught her in his strong arms. An attendant opened the door, and he carried her through it and laid her on a bench just outside, meaning to summon the woman in the ladies' cloak room to her assistance. Perhaps there was some outer garment there awaiting its owner, for the thin, worn, blue serge looked ill-fitted for the bleak autumn day.

But before Denis could put his plan into execution the girl opened her eyes slowly and spoke.

"Did I faint? How foolish of me. I suppose the room was hot, and I felt dizzy."

"You must have been over tired. Let me get you something; I am sure you are not fit to walk home without."

But she declined. Denis, really anxious about the poor little thing, insisted on taking her down the steps; she leaned so heavily on his arm, her feet so evidently seemed tottering, that he took the law into his own hands, and calmly stopping at a substantial-looking confectioner's went in with his reluctant charge.

"It's just tea time," he said, persuasively, "and all ladies like tea. You'll feel better after a cup, you will indeed."

"But I left my purse at home," said the girl in a whisper. "I've only a penny for the tram in my pocket."

"Then you must let me be your banker," said Denis, simply. "You shall pay me back, I promise you; and I am quite sure you will never get home without some tea."

It was good tea, served in a separate teapot for themselves, and with cream. The attendant brought an assortment of cakes, and—at Denis's desire—a plate of ham sandwiches; an awful fear had seized on him that his companion's ailment was not faintness so much as semi-starvation.

And he was right. Audrey Nugent had tasted nothing that day since breakfast, which had been of a very meagre kind. A lamp refuses to burn without oil, and so that poor little weary frame had well-nigh lost its power for want of nourishment.

"You look much better now," said Sir Denis to his charge, after he had administered a second cup of tea and another sandwich. "Do you know you gave me a terrible fright!"

"It was very good of you to care," said the girl, sadly. "Few people would be so kind to a stranger."

"Well, you see, I had been watching you some time, and thinking how fast you wrote—your pen seemed to fly; and you are a little—only just a little—like a great friend of mine, and so you reminded me of her, and—"

He broke off rather lamely; but Audrey quite understood. He was engaged to a girl, perhaps,

with hair like hers; she knew she had pretty hair; and so he had been kind to her just because he thought how he would feel if his fiancée looked so white and ill.

Yes, Audrey understood; and she was not at all offended; she rather preferred knowing it—it seemed to give her more confidence in the stranger's kindness.

"Now," said Sir Denis, kindly, "you may begin to think about the tram. Where does it start from?"

"The corner of Gray's-inn-road; I live at Islington."

"We'd better have a cab," said Sir Denis; "it will take much less time, and you really are not fit to go knocking about in trams. Have you lived in London long?"

"Not all my life, but ever since I can remember," the girl answered; "after father died mother preferred not to live on where people knew her; so then we came to London."

"And your mother lives with you?"

"No," said the girl, in a sad little voice; "she is dead; there are only my sister and I left, and Nell is a cripple."

It was a touching little story; and Audrey's tongue once loosed it seemed a relief to her to pour it out to anyone so kind and sympathetic.

Her father had no relations; her mother's family had quarrelled with her on her marriage. The sisters did not even know their names; they both worked hard in their respective ways. Audrey did type-writing, and made extracts for authors at the British Museum; and Nell—poor patient Nell—did plain needlework—the fine kind which ladies still had done by hand, and which requires an almost suicidal amount of eyesight and is so poorly paid one wonders anyone cares to undertake it.

It was a pitiful little story, and Denis Adair felt strangely moved as he listened to it. If only one of the sisters had been an artist he might have invented a pressing desire for his own picture; had Nell worked art embroidery he might have been seized with a longing for an elaborate smoking-cap, and so have cheered their hearts by an order for one fairly paid for, but type writing and plain needlework afforded no scope for his generosity.

"Please come in and let Nell thank you," said Audrey, when the cab stopped before a shabby house in an Islington side street.

He could not refuse, lest she should be hurt, and his visit was a pleasant surprise, for the room into which he followed Audrey was so homelike as to have nothing of the lodging house about it; and Nell, poor, deformed cripple though she was, had one of those angel faces given sometimes to hunchbacks, perhaps as a sort of compensation for their poor crooked bodies.

There was one kindness at least in his power to offer; books were mentioned, and he found the sisters loved reading, and suffered from a famine of mental food. The free library was so far off they could seldom go there. He promised to send some magazines. "He had quite done with them, Miss Nugent need not hesitate to accept them, and so on."

"He is a good man," said Nell, when the door had closed on their strange visitor; "and oh, what a pleasant face he has!"

"He was very kind," admitted Audrey; "but, oh, Nell, meeting people like that as equals, just once in a way, only makes the rest of our life more terrible."

"You are tired and out of spirits, dear," said the elder girl, tenderly. "You will feel more hopeful another day."

Audrey shook her head and went on with her interminable copying. She was thinking of that "great friend" of Denis Adair's of whom he said she had reminded him. That girl doubtless had an easy life. She did not toil sixteen hours a day just for a mere pittance. Oh, fortune was very cruelly unfair that one girl should have so much wealth, ease, and the love of Denis Adair.

"We shall never see him again," Audrey said a little tartly, when Nell ventured to allude to their visitor, but in this she was wrong; the Nugents were destined to meet Sir Denis Adair again, and at no very distant period.

CHAPTER VI.

THAT autumn passed with laggard steps to Denis Adair. For one thing he missed the man who if not his closest friend had yet been his most frequent companion.

His recommendation proved effectual, and Dick Chesney was duly engaged as private secretary and social leader to Jonathan Blake, of the Hall, Heron Dyke, a hideous red brick building built by the retired manufacturer himself within four miles of Heron Dyke proper (or Adair Court as it was equally called), on purpose—spiteful people said—that if his prey escaped him and he could not possess the property of the Adairs he might yet have a homestead in the county.

"Chesney's not a bad sort of fellow," said Mr. Blake, after his first interview with Adair's protégé; "but you must make him understand one thing clearly, Sir Denis, I'll have no philandering with the twins."

"Chesney's a recent widower, and your daughters are so young there can be no danger."

"Oh, I don't know about that. Girls think a widower interesting, and Adela's a precocious young puss, and she's only a year and a half younger than her mother when I married her."

"I feel sure you may trust Chesney, Mr. Blake," said Sir Denis; "but I'll mention it."

And he did.

"My good fellow," said Dick, amiably, "have you seen the Misses Blake lately? No. Then take my word for it they are quite safe. I never in my life saw two such plain damsels. I married for money once. I confess it. The next time I attempt matrimony I shall go where money is; but I must have beauty too."

So Dick was duly engaged, and took his departure for the Hall, leaving Denis Adair in London to miss him more than he might have missed a better man, for it was characteristic of Mr. Chesney that he was invariably pleasant, and could make himself agreeable to men of far nobler instincts than his own.

It seemed to Denis Adair that his whole soul cried out for Beryl, and that he should never quite succeed in trampling down his love for her. If only she had lived somewhere else it would have been easier (or he fancied so), but here in London, where he saw the magic word Liverpool-street on a dozen omnibuses every day, where he knew an hour or less would take him to her side—it was a terrible battle, a battle he fought and won every day—not to fling aside all prudence and hurry to her side.

He had been in London some weeks. November had come, bringing with it a November fog. While at an evening party he encountered Lady Lester. He had always liked her, for though she might be mercenary in her son's interest she was still a very pleasant, well-informed woman. To his own delight Sir Denis took her in to supper, and then, when there came a pause in their conversation he introduced the subject nearest to his heart.

"Do you know, Lady Lester, I had the pleasure of meeting a near relation of yours this summer?"

She opened her eyes with a smile of incredulity. "I don't like to contradict you, Sir Denis, but as a fact I have no near relations except Charley, and I suppose you don't mean him!"

"I was speaking of your niece."

"My niece!" she started and opened her eyes wider still; "you can't possibly mean that the Dents honoured you with a sight of Beryl. Why, I thought she was so sacred and precious they kept her shut up in a glass case, and only introduced dull City people to her who would not be likely to spoil their plans."

It was Adair's turn to look mystified.

"I don't understand what you mean by 'plans.' I met Miss Beryl at Broadgate, where she was staying with her uncle and aunt."

"Horridly vulgar people, I suppose!" questioned her, ladyship; "you know I have never seen them."

"Mr. and Mrs. Dent may not be very polished," he admitted; "but they are a simple kindly pair. I liked them very much."

"Well, I did all I could for Beryl. I had her to stay with me when she was seventeen, and

ugly enough to serve as a scarecrow, and I invited her to come to me for the season, but she refused, and then I washed my hands of her."

"She told me of your offer."

"Perhaps the Dents made her refuse," said my lady thoughtfully, "and it was not the poor child's fault after all."

Denis could hardly acquit Beryl of a share in the refusal.

"They have brought her up, and are very kind to her," he said gravely; "so I suppose it is natural she should feel grateful to them. They make no difference between her and their own children, and I suppose that touches her."

"She has not the least cause to be grateful to them," said Lady Lester coldly, "and they ought to make a very great difference between her and their own children. Beryl Chesney is a nobleman's grandchild."

"Is her name Chesney?" and even then it never struck Sir Denis she could be related to Dick.

"Certainly. You can't mean they make her pass by theirs."

"She was never formally introduced to me; she was called 'Miss Beryl' in the household, and I fell into the way of it, never doubting that her surname was Dent."

"My sister Kathleen married John Chesney, and Beryl is their only surviving child. He was the son of a very rich City man, and left the child a lot of money. I daresay it is more by this time. Of course I ought to have had the care of Beryl. I could have taught her what was due to her fortune, and introduced her in the best society, but her father left her to his sister's care, and a pretty mess she has made of it."

"I never dreamed Miss Beryl was an heiress," confessed Sir Denis. "I thought, forgive me, she was an orphan niece whom Mr. Dent received into his home from kindness."

"Why don't you say charity?" snapped Lady Lester; "but it's all of a piece with the Dents. I suppose they mean Beryl to marry their son and keep the money in the family."

"Mr. Dent junior was married this summer, so you must be mistaken."

"Ah! well she is terribly plain, poor girl; but she had good eyes, and promised to sing well; if I had had the care of her I would have made her at least presentable. Now I suppose she is just a plain middle-class young woman, who looks on church bazaars and mild flirtations with the clergy as the salt of life."

Sir Denis went home to dream of Beryl, and when he woke at last, after a restless and unrefreshing slumber, he found himself with a grave problem to solve. Only the want of money had prevented his declaring his love for Beryl. Now that he knew she was an heiress was he justified in asking her to be his wife?

He would not be marrying her for her money, since he passionately loved her, but—he could not have married her without it.

He had no idea even now of the extent of her wealth, but felt sure it would be thirty thousand pounds, more than enough to free Heron Dyke from Mr. Blake. He knew that, taking the matter in a worldly way, his old family and title would be thought an equivalent for Beryl's fortune. He knew, too, that he loved her with every fibre of his heart. Should he tell her so, or should he let her wealth part them as a few weeks ago his own poverty had done?

Then he tried to temporize with himself. It was not absolutely necessary to decide to-day. Why should he not go out to Clapton and call at the Oaks. After their intimacy at Broadgate it was quite permissible to call on Mrs. Dent. There would be no need to take any definite step this afternoon—but at least he would see his darling, and feast his eyes on her fresh, girlish beauty.

It was a dull November day, and the scenery between Liverpool-street and Clapton is not beautiful or picturesque even in the summer sunshine, but the little journey seemed to Denis Adair perfectly delightful, and he alighted at Clapton Station in the best of spirits.

He asked his way to the Oaks, fancying at first that with such a vague address he might have some difficulty in finding Beryl; but the porter

made no demur; he knew the house well, he said; it was just under a mile; and then he gave such lucid and full directions that a child might have followed them, and Denis rewarded him with a florin before leaving the station.

It was a new world to him. I have heard it said that the Eastern suburbs do not differ so very much from those the other side of London after all. This I doubt. They always seem to me to have a special character of their own.

But Denis knew nothing of suburbs as a whole. He had been to Putney and Richmond, but only to picnics and boat-races; he had visited the Crystal Palace, but knew nothing of the roads nor the streets near it. His London—that is, the London he knew well—was bordered by Kensington on the West and Temple Bar on the East.

So Clapton was a revelation to him. He looked at some of the square substantially built houses, and hoped they were not the Oaks; he passed obsequious little semi-detached tenements and wondered what the lives of their inhabitants were like, and then, quite suddenly, he came to carriage gates on which "The Oaks" was inscribed in large letters.

He passed through into a trimly kept gravel path, and then he perceived that the Oaks must be a mansion, for there was no trace of bricks or mortar in sight, and the winding path seemed to lead on and on, how far he could not guess. He met a gardener, and questioned him.

Yes, that was Mr. Dent's; he'd come in sight of the house the next turn of the path.

It was a house to astonish the person who knows nothing of the mansions merchant princes delighted to build for themselves, a century or so ago just outside London. In November gardens do not make much show, but Denis caught sight of a large conservatory as he walked briskly up to the hall door.

Mr. Dent preferred women servants. He could have afforded a footman, or even two, but he objected to the change, and kept to the "superior parlour maid," who had been thought the correct thing when he and his wife married.

Denis Adair's ring was answered by the very maid he had seen in Aubrey-square, and he knew from her smile of recognition that she had not forgotten him.

"Is Mr. Dent in?"

"No, Sir Denis, master and mistress won't be home till dinner-time."

"And the young ladies?"

"Miss Chesney is at home, sir."

Then it was true, that wonderful tale of Lady Lester's. What became of Denis Adair's prudence? His assurance to himself that a call at Clapton by no means meant that he should propose to the heiress. He slipped half a sovereign into Amelia's hand.

"Don't announce me, there's a good girl," he said pleasantly; "I should like to take her by surprise."

Amelia grinned. "Superior parlour maids" can spot a love affair as soon as other people. She conducted him to the drawing-room door and let him enter alone.

It was a big, old-fashioned room, with a large fire in the grate. In a big chair drawn close to the cheerful blaze sat the girl he loved; but not the happy, smiling Beryl he had known at Broadgate.

This Beryl had a tired, weary expression, and in the depth of her violet eyes was the shadow of a keen sorrow. Adair had only time just to notice this when she turned her head and saw him.

"Sir Denis!" and a flood of crimson dyed her neck and face, "have you really found us out at last? Aunt Julia was wondering only yesterday if we should ever see you again."

"I've come to tell you how I missed you, darling," said Sir Denis. "Beryl, I never knew quite all you were to me until I lost you. I want you to give yourself to me, and promise to be my wife."

(To be continued.)

THE longest wire span is a telegraph wire over the River Ristuah, in India. It is over 6,000 feet.

STRAYED AWAY.

—101—

CHAPTER LII.—(continued.)

"You are Mr. Wilson," he said, savagely.

"Yes."

"Where can I find you?"

"You have my card. In the city from ten to four; at home always after the latter time; and, believe me, I would rather meet you as a friend than an enemy."

Percy muttered an impatient oath. The fierce and fiery temper of the man was all pent up, and it was ready to display itself, as it would have done, except that he, like Arthur, respected the proprietress, and would not make a scene.

The boat was just about to start and Falkland had a tigerish rage within him. But for that stately gentleman, who treated him so coolly, he would have been on that boat, and Adelaide with him. He was stricken down in the very moment of his triumph.

He followed Arthur and Miss Millard into the train for London. Though he knew that he had lost her, he had a desperate wish to say something to her—a desperate wish to do something to Arthur. There was no danger in him; but he thought there was for the time.

Miss Millard had been thinking deeply. She thanked Heaven for having sent her a protector, and she shuddered when she saw into what an abyss her infatuation might have plunged her. The truth, the knowledge of Percy's villainy, was a fearful shock. She had loved him very dearly.

But he fell from the pure shrine of her heart from the instant that Arthur said, "This man is married." Her eyes were opened. Strong as was her affection for him the knowledge that he had loved another was more than she could bear.

In the time that passed from the moment when Arthur first spoke to Percy Miss Millard was in a dead calm—stunned, as it were; though her soul was surging with emotion she could not speak when Arthur put her into the train and took his seat by her side.

She was white to the lips, and every nerve in her body trembled. Arthur expected what would happen. He spoke to her in a low and gentle voice.

"Miss Millard!"

The poor girl looked at him with beseeching eyes, and then fell slowly forward, in a dead faint. She fell into Arthur's arms, her fair hair falling in a golden shower over his shoulder, her white arm dropping helpless round his neck. Had she been a baby he could not have gathered her to him with more respect and tenderness.

At one of the stations he sent the guard for some brandy as a restorative, and forced it between her lips. The powerful stimulant revived her, and brought back her senses; but she could not at first dismiss the idea that she was still with Percy; and the idea recurred to her with dread.

"You are going to take me home," she said, remembering the whole truth. "But—oh! Mr. Wilson! what will they say to me?"

"Much," was the grave reply; "but it is better to hear their reproaches than your own. Think, my dear Miss Millard, you return home with me, stainless—pure; and had I not been in time you would, in less than another hour, have been going across the Channel, in the power of Mr. Falkland."

Adelaide dropped her head to hide the crimson flush on her cheeks. Arthur took both her hands in his own.

"Every friend I have will turn from me," she said.

"I shall not, Miss Millard. I will be your friend—more than your friend, if you will let me."

The kindness overcame her, and she wept. He was glad to see those tears; and he was glad that while she wept her forehead rested on his shoulder, and she did not shrink from the arm that held her to him.

"But to think that Mr. Falkland could have so deceived me!" she sobbed; "and I loved him very much."

"Forget him, as you must. He is not worth a second thought. Wretched as he has made you, you are happier than the poor girl he has left in pain and poverty—unacknowledged, desolate—the poor girl and her child."

Miss Millard began to be interested, and Arthur, wishing to make her forget her grief, told her the story of Fanny's life, as far as he knew it. He was quite frank with her. He told her of his deep love for Fanny, and all that had happened.

"And you are like her," he said, in conclusion; "as pure, as trusting. I could love you for her sake, Miss Millard, and I do love you for your own."

"Mr. Wilson."

The tone was grave, surprised, reproachful, but not pained. He smiled down into her eyes.

"It is true, Miss Millard—Adelaide. May I call you Adelaide?"

"Yes."

"Do you think that you could ever care for me?"

The question went to the depths of her heart, and she found that the grave and handsome gentleman by her side had a large place in those depths. She was not a coquette or a hypocrite. An infatuation for Percy had filled her mind, but there had grown a regard for Mr. Wilson that merged very easily into love.

He had saved her, and she was grateful. But for his kindly aid she could not have gone back even had she repented at the last moment, and refused to accompany Percy on what would have been a fatal journey over the short sea distance between Dover and France. The shame would have kept her away, and left her in Percy's power.

But with Arthur Wilson by her side, Adelaide felt strong. He would explain everything—he would take her home. He who had rescued her from dishonour made the return home simple, and her soul, turning from Percy, went towards Arthur in confidence and affection.

"Do you think you could ever care for me?" he asked again; and she answered, with a sigh,—

"I am not worthy of you, Mr. Wilson. What can you think of me after this?"

"Knowing the entire truth, I can only think that one who has loved a bad man so well can love a good man better."

"But you could never respect me."

"I can love you, and do. And if you give me leave to be your guardian I can tell your father that you are mine, and he will not be angry with you for this indiscretion. Shall it be so?"

Her look was an assent. He drew her to him closely—gently, and held her to his breast.

He saw by the tranquil happiness on her fair face that he was loved at last.

"Will you kiss me?" he asked.

For reply the pretty mouth was upturned to him, and her lips returned the pressure of his. Fanny was not forgotten in that moment of deep joy, for he thought,—

"She is like Frances—as good, as true, as beautiful—and she is mine, the more that I have saved her."

Adelaide lay in his arms quite quiet; that broad chest was a refuge for her; the love that made it heave and fall a safeguard for her happiness.

She locked her hand tightly in his, and trusting to him entirely, was prepared to face her father without fear or shame.

Percy was in the train—six carriages behind them—alone, as they were; but they were happy, and he had the demon of disappointed passion in his soul. He saw them alight when they reached London. He saw them enter a cab together, and what stung him most bitterly of all was that Miss Millard never once looked at him or for him.

Arthur and Miss Millard were at Penge by five in the afternoon. Adelaide had been missed, and much anxious inquiry made for her; but they were far from suspecting her peril, what it had been. Mr. Millard was considerably surprised to see his child return with Arthur.

But Arthur did not leave him long in doubt. He meant to have no secrecy; leave nothing to be explained; so he answered Mr. Millard's look of inquiry by saying,—

"You are surprised to see us return together!"

"I am," smiled Mr. Millard. "I was not aware you went together, nor did I think Adelaide intended to be absent so long."

Adelaide had retired, leaving the two gentlemen alone. They entered the breakfast-room, and Millard saw, by the gravity of Arthur's face, that he had something to tell.

Mr. Wilson went quietly into a circumstantial account of the whole matter, beginning with Miss Millard's journey to the station, and his own suspicion of her purpose when he saw her in London.

Millard heard him dumbly.

"Wretched girl," he said, angrily, "she has ruined her reputation for ever."

He started up to ring for her, but Arthur caught his arm.

"Not an angry word to her, Mr. Millard; not a word to anyone but Mrs. Millard. Remember this—since Adelaide left your roof this morning she has been in my company. The world can say nothing."

"But it is sure to be known—and what will people think?"

"What they please. It will not matter to you, her father, or to me—her husband."

"Mr. Wilson!"

"Yes," said Arthur, with a tranquil smile, "Adelaide has promised, and I shall take her in perfect faith. I will not permit a doubt to be looked—even here. The rashness that induced her to take that step grew out of her love for a bad man; and surely she who could love a bad man so well can love a good one better."

"You are a generous fellow," said the stockbroker, taking his hand. "I do not see how Adelaide can help loving you, and I am sure that you will never reproach her."

"Nor permit her to be reproached. And it is settled—Adelaide is to be my wife."

"I give her to you gladly, Mr. Wilson. I can say no more, except to thank you for saving her from that rascal Falkland."

"But I saved her for myself," smiled Arthur.

"So you see all men are selfish, after all."

CHAPTER LIII.

OUT ON THE RIVER.

It was on the day that Fanny went out to complete the sacrifice of her young existence to the man who had already caused her so much misery that Arthur rescued Adelaide from Percy Falkland.

Old Bill West, going home after a fruitless search for work, found Fanny absent, and was disappointed. He had taken great pains to keep the truth from her, fearing that she would be troubled if she knew that he was out of work.

So he and Jem went out every morning at the usual time, and returned in the evening at the usual time, as if they had been at work. They kept up the innocent, good-natured artifices for some days.

"We won't trouble her any more, if we can help it," said Mr. West. "Whatever comes, we won't give her cause to go away again; and something's sure to turn up soon—oh, Jem!"

Jem said "Yes" with a sullenness meant for the Falklands, and not for his father. The lad had a revengeful feeling against the people who had added injustice to injury, and he had many a time pondered how he could be revenged.

On this evening, when they returned, old Bill asked for Fanny, and was told by his wife that she had just run out, but not for long, as the door was left open.

"And you may be sure," said Mrs. West, "if she had meant to be long, she would have taken baby with her."

Just then baby woke up and began to cry. Mr. West lumbered upstairs instantly, and took the little one from its cot. He quieted it by a walk to and fro in the room, and in that walk he saw the letter on Fanny's table.

"Mother," he said, lumbering down again, with the letter in his hand, and baby on his

shoulder, "you had better look at this. Little Alf's got me so tight round the neck that I can't do it myself."

Mrs. West opened the folded paper, and spelled the words out slowly. Her look frightened the carpenter. He saw her tremble and fall into a chair.

Stricken with a terrible fear, he said,—

"What's the matter, mother?"

"Oh, William! our poor girl's gone to make away with herself!"

The carpenter, with a white calm on his face, put the child down, and read the letter for himself. He got up without a word, and calling for Jem, went out.

He was so accustomed to have Jem trudging by his side that he felt stronger for Jem's company; and a few brief words, as they went along, told the lad all. And Jem swore a terrible oath that if anything happened to his sister he would burn the Falklands out of house and home.

They searched for Fanny everywhere; walked London through, and West would have inquired of the police if Jem had not suggested that the police would not know Fanny from anyone else. They went on their hopeless errand, heavy-hearted, desponding, and midnight came before their tired footsteps took them home.

There were no tidings there. Jem went out again—alone; and by the merest chance went towards Westminster-bridge.

Had he been five minutes sooner he might have seen and saved his sister; but it was fated they were not to meet just then. Jem passed over the bridge, while Fanny stood at the bottom of the steps.

A young workman out for the night, because, being out of employ, he could afford no lodging, stood leaning idly over the bridge, when glancing by chance towards the wharves he saw the pale face of Fanny in the moonlight, and instantly suspecting her intention, he ran to the steps.

"Some poor girl going to drown herself," he thought. "Got no home, perhaps, like me, or tired of life. I hope I shall not be too late."

But he was, Fanny, startled by his foot-fall, and determined to carry out her purpose, uttered a last faint prayer, and threw herself into the river. The tide was running strongly, and it took her away in a moment. The young man sprang after her, regardless of the danger to himself.

"Help!" he said, as he plunged in. "A woman drowning!"

The cry startled a few solitary passers-by, a policeman, the proprietor of a baked potato-can, and Mr. Percy Falkland, returning at the moment from one of his haunts of dissipation. The policeman could not swim—the man with the potato-can would not run the risk of losing his property, and Mr. Falkland had drunk too much to care whether a woman was drowned or not. He was in a state of savage callousness, and pitied no one.

The gallant fellow in the river had to do his noble work alone. Fanny sank once, and the second time he had to dive after her. He caught her, and made for the steps, though the heavy waters tried their best to drag him back. He would not have gained a footing had not the policeman been there to help him.

"Poor girl!" said the young man. "I am afraid it's all over with her. Put her down gently, policeman—as gently as you can."

They laid her on the pavement—the young man resting her head on his knee, the policeman holding his light on her face; and Percy, with a strange chill at his breast, mastered his emotion, so that he could say quietly,—

"Is she dead?"

"Quite dead, poor thing!" said the workman. "She struck her head as she went in, and the first plunge did the rest."

CHAPTER LIV.

IN THE HOSPITAL.

PERCY went on thus, in his present state while his nature was changed by the influence of

drink and the fiery sense of disappointment. He felt a savage gladness mingle with remorse when the man who had taken Fanny from the water said that she was quite dead.

He was released at last. The poor girl would no longer be a burden to him. The nature of the man was so changed that he was sorry the tragedy had not taken place before. Nothing is so remorseless as disappointed love.

A crowd soon collected round poor Fanny, and one bystander, having inquired into the case, suggested an immediate removal to the hospital. His kindness was of a practical turn. He called a cab, and paid the fare.

The young man who had taken Fanny from the water would not leave her. He lifted Fanny into the vehicle, and supported her in his arms throughout the brief journey. And just as the cab was about to start young Jim West arrived.

"Anything the matter?" he asked, with a foreboding of the truth.

One of the bystanders, a man who had seen so much of the sin and suffering and misery in the world that nothing came strangely to him, answered,—

"It's only a woman drowned herself. Lots of them do it now. More than ever are found, by ten to one."

Jim looked into the cab. It was moving, but he caught sight of the white face and dripping hair. He gave a low cry in his agony, and said,—

"It's my sister!—it's Fanny!"

He ran after the cab, and was at the hospital as soon. The hospital attendants were prompt and kind. They took Fanny into the ward at once, leaving Jim, the policeman, and the young man in the lobby.

One of the night surgeons, hearing the poor lad sob so bitterly, went and spoke to him encouragingly.

"I do not think she is quite gone," he said; "and if there is a spark of life we can bring her to. You may wait here and learn the result."

"Thank you, sir," sobbed Jim. "Father and I went looking for her everywhere, and when I found her she had been and drowned herself—and it's all through Mr. Percy."

The surgeon gave him a sympathizing glance. He thought he could read the story—the old one.

"Who is Mr. Percy?"

"Master's son, where father and me worked. He took her away."

"And in a land like ours!" thought the surgeon. "He—the direct cause of the poor girl's crime—escapes unpunished, while she, if she lives, will be imprisoned for having attempted to take the life he made her weary of. I wonder whether we shall ever find a member of Parliament with courage enough to trace the evil to its source, and punish the man, not the woman—the wronger, not the wronged."

He turned then to the young man.

"It was you who brought the girl out, was it not?"

"Yes, sir. I saw her go in, and I tried to be in time. I hope I have been."

"Are you aware," asked the gentleman, "that if the girl is dead you will have a reward of seven-and-sixpence for recovering the body?"

"I have heard so, sir."

"And if she lives you will get nothing; such is the state of the law."

"I did not do it for the sake of getting anything," said the young man, with honest pride. "I have a little sister of my own. She's young now, and pretty, and there's no knowing what may come to her."

"What is your name?"

"William Gibson."

"And what are you?"

"A stonemason by trade—out of work, just now. I happened to be on the bridge, because I had nowhere else to go."

"But you have parents?"

"Yes; and they have four children, besides me. Nell is thirteen, the others younger. So you see I can't get shelter there. They've only got one room."

The doctor put his hand into his pocket, and gave him five shillings.

"You are a brave fellow," he said; "and I hope you will get on."

"Thank you, sir."

Jim was too much absorbed in his own grief to have thought yet of thanking his companion; but he went to William Gibson now.

"I haven't been able to say anything to you yet," he said, choking down a sob; "but you know how I feel. Whether poor Fanny lives or not you did your best to save her; and we are not so hard up but what we can do something for you."

"I don't want anything, my friend," said William Gibson. He was an intelligent fellow, and he spoke well. "The five shillings that the doctor gave me will carry me on for a day or two, and I may fall in for a job. What made your sister do it?"

"Why, you see, a gentleman took her away from home, and then deserted her; and it seems he wrote her a letter that made her miserable. She left her baby at home, and a letter on the table, telling us that she was going to do away with herself; and we tried to find her everywhere. Father walked till he was worn out, and then he came out again, and I saw her just as the cab was going away. A good girl Fanny was—never a better in the world—till she saw Mr. Percy."

"And I suppose he calls himself a gentleman," said Gibson, "and thinks it nothing to drive a poor girl to madness. I know if it was a sister of mine it would be a bad job for him."

"And so it will be as it is," said Jim, between his teeth. "I'll find a way to make him feel that he can't ruin us for nothing. If Fanny dies what a story I shall have to go home with—break mother's heart, just as sure as I am here."

"Let's hope for the best," said Gibson, kindly. "You see she wasn't three minutes in the water, and these hospital doctors can do almost anything. I don't think she was quite gone."

The young man spoke against his own conviction, but he deserved pardon since the motive was a good one. Jim began to hope, and he looked at Gibson gratefully. Presently the surgeon came to them. He smiled in answer to the wistful glance, and Jim asked, eagerly,—

"How is it, sir?"

"Your sister is safe, my man; but she will have to stay here for some days. She is very feeble, and inclined to be delirious."

"Let me see her, please!"

"It is against the rules," said the surgeon.

But Jim pleaded so earnestly that a reluctant permission was given, and the kind-hearted gentleman conducted him to the ward. Poor Fanny lay in bed, her face as white as the sheet that was folded down, her chest rising very faintly.

"Mind," said the surgeon, in a whisper, "she must not be excited."

Jim choked down his emotion; and, kneeling by the bedside, passed his arm gently round Fanny's neck.

"Fanny," he said, kissing her, "speak to me—there's a dear."

No answer came.

"It's me—Jim—you know; your brother Jim. Do speak to me."

Her eyes undlosed then. She tried to smile, but was too weak.

He kissed her again.

"Mother shall come to-morrow, and bring baby. Would you like her to?"

She moved her head in assent. The surgeon, careful not to let his patient be excited, drew Jim away.

"You may come again," he said, "and her mother may visit her in the afternoon, but no more must be said now. You see she is doing well. You will have her at home in less than a week."

"Thank you, sir, and bless you. When I get in work again I'll put something in the hospital box every time I pass."

The surgeon smiled, and patted him on the

shoulder. He liked Jim's good and simple idea of gratitude.

Jim left the hospital, Gibson with him. The policeman stopped them in the lobby.

"She is your sister," he said to young West.

"Yes."

"I must have her name and address."

"What for?"

"Why, to report the case. If she gets over it she will have to appear. People ain't allowed to commit suicide; at least, they ain't allowed to half do it. If they does it altogether it can't be helped; and if they don't quite do it it's three months."

"That's a queer state of law for a Christian land," said Gibson, ironically. "If a poor girl repented, and wished to be saved, the idea of being taken up might drive her to finish. If she is to have three months don't you think that the man who tried to make her do it ought to get six?"

"That's nothing to do with me. If a girl chooses to go wrong it's her look out."

"So much for you," said Gibson. "You are like a good many men, and it's a pity that if you haven't any better sense you don't find a little charity. Come along, mate."

Jim gave the policeman Fanny's name and address, and went homewards with young Gibson.

He offered Gibson a bed, but it was refused.

"There'll be trouble enough in your home to-night," said the mason, "and a stranger won't be wanted there. I can get a bed at a coffee-shop; and if you don't mind I will give you a look up in a day or two."

"Do—whenever you like."

"And don't you believe all that the policeman said about your sister getting three months; it's more likely that when the magistrate hears the case he will give her up to her mother. You see, the doctor, being a good sort, is sure to put in a word for her; and if she says it might be dangerous to put her in prison they'll let her off."

Jim was comforted by the idea. Gibson walked with him to the door, and then went to seek a lodging at a coffee-house in the Walworth-road.

The Night Act had not come into operation then, and he was fortunate enough to get some hot coffee and have his wet clothes dried at the kitchen fire.

Coffee-house keepers are a kind-hearted set as a rule; they deal with the honest poor, and sympathise with what they see.

"You are wet enough," said the keeper of the shop, when he brought Gibson his coffee and bread-and-butter. "Been in the canal?"

"No. I went into the Thames to pull a young lady out—that's how I got wet."

"And did you save her?"

"Yes; she's in the hospital now, getting all right; and the surgeon gave me five shillings."

"Well, you had better go to bed; I'll send your coffee up, and dry your clothes for you. I'll lend you some dry things for the night, and if you sleep between the blankets you won't get the shivers."

Gibson accepted the offer gratefully, and was soon in bed. The landlord lent him a change of linen, and sent him up a rasber of bacon gratuitously.

The young mason made a better meal than had fallen to his lot for many a day, and he slept soundly. It was the first night's rest he had had for nearly a week.

CHAPTER LV.

PERCY'S REPENTANCE.

JIM went home with his sad story, and found his parents sitting up for him.

He could see that his mother had been crying, and there was a dimness in the eyes of Mr. West. Both looked at him with a glance, half hopeful, and the rest despairing; and Bill West, in a tone that, more than the look, showed despair, said,—

"Well, Jim."

"I have seen her, father."

"Where?"

"Why, she tried to drown herself, and now she's in the hospital. I passed over the bridge once and did not see her, and when I came back there had just taken her out."

The carpenter clasped his hands and bowed his head. His lips moved, whether in prayer for his child or malediction on the head of the man who had driven her to the deed it would be hard to say.

"Let Heaven deal with him as he deserves!" said West, solemnly. "I say no more than that."

"Yes, I found her," said Jem, some tears coming back as the scene returned to him. "There was her face in the corner of the cab whiter than death, and all her wet hair dripping round it; and when they carried her into the hospital she looked just like dead; but I waited and waited—talking to the young chap that brought her out, and somehow he cheered me up, and the doctor came at last."

Mrs. West laid her hand on the lad's arm, and peered into his face.

"Jem," she said, with her soul in her voice, "tell me the truth. Don't hide anything. Is Fanny living?"

"She is, mother, as true as I'm here."

"Then they'll let me see her. They won't deny her own mother."

And she was preparing to start, but Jem stopped her.

"It's against the rules. The doctor told me that her mother might see her to-morrow afternoon. He wouldn't let me stay more than a minute with her, and they do take care of her I can tell you. They had given her brandy and things, and there was a nurse sitting up with her. The doctor said she would be home again in less than a week."

He did not tell them of the other trouble that threatened Fanny—the being tried for attempting self-destruction. The poor old couple were smitten too heavily already.

They had little sleep that night. The morning found them weary with tears and waiting, yet there was some comfort in the thought that Fanny was not quite lost to them.

In the afternoon they went to the hospital and were allowed to see her; but fever had set in, and the interview was necessarily a short one.

When Bill West looked at the wreck of his beautiful child—heard her muttered incoherence—her sad tears and sadder laughter, his heart filled with bitterness against the destroyer.

Had Percy and the carpenter met then, the gentlemanly builder would have been humbled before the rough eloquence of his father's sometime workman.

It soon became known in the neighbourhood and in Lambeth. Young Bill West told Fred Crosby, Fred told Emily White, and it went round to a whole crowd of friends who went to offer sympathy.

Fred Crosby and Emily were thinking of getting married now. The young carpenter was putting money away to buy the house with, and Emily was as wisely busy making stores of household linen and replenishing her wardrobe, so that extra expenses should not come upon them too early at the outset.

They had no troubles. Fred grew fonder of her every day, and she had always been fond of him. They saw Mr. Palmer once—and only once.

He was prowling after Emily again; but, seeing Fred with her, he was wise enough to withdraw and keep out of their way in future. Fred's suggestive look warned him that it was the safest course to take.

Percy, stricken with remorse when the morning came, sent for his father, and made arrangements to leave the country. He had seen, as he thought, Fanny lying dead before him, and the sight so haunted him that he longed to be away. He had plunged so deeply, and for such a length of time, into a wild career of dissipation that his nerves were unstrung and his senses blunted. But the keen agony of repentance came to him soon.

He was at Dover, after a feverish, restless

night. Every fibre in his body trembled under the influence of reaction from the previous day's excitement. It was as well, perhaps, that something occurred to check him in the way he was going.

He was losing self-respect; growing morally degraded; drinking hard; mixing with the worst company; doing the things that brutalize a man, make him a misery to himself and a scourge to society.

But the sight he saw on the foot of the bridge sobered him. He took sundry bottles of soda-water, dashed with brandy, to cool his feverish throat and steady his hand; and he tried to think over what had happened. The events of the previous day had startled him by their rapidity.

There was the visit from Miss Millard in the morning, the passionate scene between them, and their flight.

The pursuit by Arthur Wilson, who came upon Percy in the very moment when his prize seemed safely in his grasp.

Then the return home, when Percy, to drown his disappointment, had plunged into an orgie. Drank and gambled; sang and talked in a way that he had the grace to be ashamed of now.

Then the walk home, while his brain was reeling, till he came upon the group with a drowned woman in its midst.

A drowned woman—that woman his wife, and she was dead, for the man who had tried to save her told him so.

Reflection came to him by degrees. The first was mirrored in his mind, and he saw each incident of his love-story.

He could remember, as well as if it were but yesterday, his first meeting with Fanny in the building-yard, and he recalled how he had followed her—how he had seen her sweet face reflected in the milliner's window when she was looking at the bonnets.

And then the next day: their visit to the National Gallery; the ride to Richmond; the boat on the river; the dinner at the hotel; their love-scene in the quiet of the golden twilight. And how beautiful she had looked in the flush of her new happiness—how different from the fair, pale girl he saw stretched on the pavement—as he imagined—dead!

Yet scarcely three years had elapsed since they first met. Their history, with its many incidents of joy and trouble, extended over no longer a time, and his heart smote him when conscience told him how much he had made Fanny suffer more than she deserved.

"If she had been indiscreet," Conscience asked him, "what could he say of his own conduct in regard to Miss Millard?"

He remembered Fanny in all her beauty and her caressive love, and he could have wept in remorse of soul.

He would have given worlds now to recall her from the death he had driven her to—but it was too late.

"It is too late," he said in agony; "and I think this morning there is not a more miserable wretch on the face of the earth than I am! Go where I may, do what I will, the memory of that poor girl will haunt me!"

Mr. Falkland the elder did not delay in going to his son. He started immediately, upon receipt of the letter, and was at Percy's town apartments in the afternoon. The merchant was shocked at the change in his son's appearance.

He was touched, too, by the subdued air with which Percy received him—the quietude, almost humility, with which Percy took his hand. The elder Falkland's first thought was that Percy might be in trouble about money matters. He hoped it was so.

The old man was fond of his son, in spite of his stern temper, and wished for nothing better than a chance of displaying his affection.

"I want to go back to Germany, father, at once; or you must find me work elsewhere. I don't care how far away it is, the farther the better."

"Is anything wrong, Percy?"

"Much. I have killed the truest woman that ever lived. I am as guilty as if I had poured

poison down her throat, or driven a knife to her heart; and I want to get out of the way to forget it. I must work, so that I may not think of it."

"Tell me what you have done."

"I have told you, I saw poor Fanny last night lying on the stones—dead. Heaven forgive me for my callousness! But I was drunk, and something had happened in the day that made me turn against her; but I thought of it this morning. My poor girl—my wife."

"Your wife, Percy?"

"Yes," he said sadly. "She was my wife. She was too beautiful, and proud, and pure to be anything else. And I loved her too well to wish to make her anything else but my wife."

He paused for a moment, took out his handkerchief, and pressed it hard into his eyes. Then he turned upon his father almost fiercely.

"Sometimes I think it was all your fault."

"Mine?"

"Yes, yours. Was it not through you that I kept my marriage secret? Didn't I have to go away, and let the poor girl live as if she were in shame? If she had been with me, as she ought to have been, she would not have been at the mercy of other men, or in the way of temptation. I should have had no cause to be jealous."

"But you had cause!"

"Don't say a word against her," said Percy, with so much suppressed bitterness that the old man looked at him in fear. "I see now that I was a fool—a brute. She was as pure as the stars that shone last night on her dead face, and I only wish that she were living that I might show her how much I love her still."

"The Wests never knew that you had married her," said Mr. Falkland.

"Never. The poor girl took an oath never to reveal the secret, and she kept her promise far too well. Even when I discarded her she kept the promise."

"Well, my son," said the merchant, with a sigh of relief, "it cannot be helped now. It was a rash and ill-advised marriage, and the end was sure to be unhappy. How did you see her?"

"Dead—in the street. They had just taken her from the river."

"And you are sure she was dead?"

"Quite. I know it too well now."

Secretly, Mr. Falkland was glad to hear it—the more glad since he knew that they were married.

Not even to have seen the poor girl brought back to life and Percy happy could he have reconciled himself to the association with the Wests.

"What can we do for them?" he said to Percy. "The poor people must be helped. I suppose the allowance had better be settled on the child."

"Yes; that must be done. And I was thinking, father, it would be best to get them out of England—the whole family. I cannot endure the idea of meeting any of them."

"Nor I," said Mr. Falkland. "How shall we arrange it?"

"Give them a couple of thousand pounds, on condition that they emigrate. We have a right to do something for them, and we can afford it. Get them right out of the country. Let us have done with them for ever."

"And the child?"

"I do not want to see it just yet. It shall be cared for; but I cannot look at it. I should fancy it was looking at me with its mother's eyes."

"Two thousand pounds is a good deal of money," said the merchant. "Still to get rid of the whole lot I should not mind. They are sure to go. They can get plenty of land in the colonies, and being hard-working, industrious people, may make a fortune. Yes, it shall be done. Our solicitor shall call upon West in the course of a day or two and arrange with him."

"It's the best way," said Percy; "but not a hundred times two thousand would repay them for the loss of their daughter, nor for the loss of my wife—the poor girl that I drove to the river."

CHAPTER LVI.

ON THE WAY TO REDEMPTION.

PERCY stayed only to make a few hurried preparations for departure, and then he went away; but not to Germany or to work. The elder Falkland rightly judged that after his career of dissipation and excitement the conscience-stricken man did not require the oppressive brain-toll of superintending the contract at Hôpital Casel or elsewhere. It was rest he wanted—rest and change of scene.

He went from England a haunted man—the dreadful picture of that poor, pale girl on the stones for ever before his eyes. He was an altered man—chastened by remorse, quieted by sorrow.

He shunned the evil company that he had seen so much, too much of, until lately, and the old-time yearning for a good life came upon him once again.

He thought of what his life might have been had Fanny been with him—the tranquil repose of the home of a working gentleman, with the sweet figure of his wife by the hearthstone, and little children playing at his knee.

He saw what he had lost by want of moral courage, what he had caused by giving way to unjust doubt and unholiness; and the reflection nearly drove him to despair.

Like a drunkard suddenly redeemed by strength of purpose—like a sinner changed in a moment by the grace of Heaven, and brought back to piety—he saw the abyss into which he had plunged, and trembled with the horror of the sin yet upon him, even while he repented.

He might have gone on stultifying himself—seeking forgetfulness in fast life—drink and gaming, and worse, till quite lost, and swift death, or madness or imbecility came upon him; but when reflection came to him he looked back in repentance, and saw all the evil he had done. The terrible lesson of his life was his redemption, but he wrung his hands when he thought what a price he had paid for it.

"I almost wish I were dead," he said, in agony, many and many a time. "I cannot think how I ever spoke such bitter words to my poor girl. She was so pure, so patient, so full of love for me, and she even sacrificed her life at last."

In those few days when first repentance came he looked older by ten years. The builder's gentlemanly son would not have been easily recognised by friend or boon companion. There were deep lines in his face, furrows in his brow, and a few silver threads in his hair, and he looked delicate and thin, thoughtful and worn.

And he went away a wanderer, followed by the phantom that would not leave him. He saw it in his sleep. It was with him in his reveries; it came to him suddenly in the midst of other scenes—always the same sad beauty of that plaintive face upturned to the night sky—pained—placid—dead.

It haunted him so that he was taught to pray Heaven to forgive him for having wronged her so, and he had strange fancies, in which he wondered whether, if he were to pray very earnestly, Fanny would be given back to him from the grave.

He went to Paris, but the city was too gay. He wanted quiet. He tried other cities, but they were all alike. He had to make his home at an hotel; hear the hateful talk of strangers, whose sole business was pleasure. He could get no repose—such as he wanted.

Then he returned to England, but not to London. He sought a sequestered inland town, where he would not be bored by the too familiar sight of grand hotels, silken company, and glittering dinner tables. He was sick of the small Balshazzars, and the feasts that were Balshazzar-like, except for the writing on the wall. His shattered nerves and agonized heart made him sick of everything that was not peaceful.

It is strange to see how the most hardened men turn when in suffering to the religion they neglect when they need no solace—how they cling to it while the suffering lasts, as the sick man clings to the doctor, whom he forgets to pay when health is restored.

Percy purchasing some fancy articles in a shop where the pious press held its place, with small extravagancies in the way of pretty, useless trifles, read a few lines in an article on the first page of a religious paper—wanted to read more, so bought the paper, and took it with him.

Probably in the whole course of his lifetime, except when at school or college, he had never read more than a stray chapter of the Bible.

He thought the study of religion a good thing for women and children, but rather a weakness in men.

Until he was tried in the crucible of soul-pain he did not know how much solace there was in the glory of the creed.

He read the journal through from the first page to the last, and it gave a new tone to his mind.

It soothed him, gave him a better and more peaceful state of feeling; it turned his thoughts into himself, and showed him what he might have become for bad—what he might yet be for good. And on the last page he saw this,—

"A home is offered on moderate terms to a gentleman of Christian principles.—Address, the Rev. Mr. Wilson, Caswell, Westmoreland."

"In the house of a clergyman," he meditated. "I should find peace there. Learn, perhaps, to be a good man, if he came to know me and had patience; and I wonder if he will when he knows what a wretched, world-worn thing I am?"

He acted on the good resolution at once. He would not wait to send a letter, fearing that in the interval of delay other letters might be sent and another chosen.

There were other advertisements of the same kind, but he set his mind on this one.

He went down to Caswell, and found the house easily. A little girl directed him, for the Reverend Mr. Wilson was known to children, as good men are.

It was a pretty Gothic house, with the village church by its side; a range of fertile meadowland in front, and God's quiet acre behind. It was altogether a place of rest.

"Yes," he said, as he stood under the porch, the green leaves and the perfume of jessamine and twining roses on the trellis-work each side of him, "there is the sweetness of repose here."

The door was opened by a servant, whose calm and cheerful countenance told of kindly treatment in the household. Her very voice was different from the voice of other servants; no nervousness, no trouble in it, as she asked,—

"Who did you please to wait, sir?"

"The Reverend Mr. Wilson."

"Will you step in, please?"

"Thanks."

The girl ushered him into a cosy room on the left hand of the house—an old-fashioned apartment, with heavy curtains, heavy furniture, and some rich oil paintings on the walls.

There was a store of books in well-preserved vellum binding—books of the past—books of the present—books of the courtly days of Addison and Steele, and books of the time when Sir Walter Scott cast a new spell over the literature of the world—books selected by a scholar, every one.

Percy was amusing himself with one of those things seen in the days of our grandmothers—an album of varieties—scraps of verse, rare and curious flowers, feathers of birds, small engravings, sketches in oil, water, pencil, and pen and ink, birthday impromptus, &c., when Mr. Wilson came in, fresh from the garden evidently, for he put his spade on the mat outside, and a pair of leather gloves on a table in the hall—a quiet, unaffected gentleman, with the instinct of his sacred calling strong within him.

"Mr. Wilson?" said Percy, encouraged by the smile that greeted him.

"Yes."

Percy handed the reverend gentleman his card.

"I saw an advertisement respecting a home—such a home as I want and feel I should like."

"And so you came down," smiled the clergyman. "Well, I dare say we shall agree. My housekeeper will arrange the terms with you,

and we had better see how we get on together for a month."

"I think I could stay for ever," said Percy, with a deep sigh. "I have not seen a place so quiet within my recollection. You will require references?"

The minister looked him up and down.

"No. I take you in good faith, and if you deceive me the sin is yours, not mine."

Percy bowed.

"When shall I see the housekeeper?"

"Mrs. Morton will conduct you to your rooms presently. During your stay here you will consider yourself one of the family."

"With pleasure."

"We have prayers at eight in the morning, and in the evening we have readings, in which you can take part if you care to. There is the Bible"—and he laid his hand upon the great book on the table—"and there are the stories told by the men whom the Bible taught to write; for it is one of my fancies," he added, with a smile, "that the Book has been the chief teacher of literature, the creator of poet, historian and novelist."

"It never occurred to me," said Percy; "for, I regret to say, I have not been a deep thinker; but I can easily agree with you now."

"Yes, in my impression, it inspired Milton, taught Byron to write 'Childe Harold,' gave us the glowing pages of Walter Scott, the tender pathos and gentle satire of Dickens, the exquisite depth and kindly humour of Thackeray; and Shakespeare was no heathen player, or he could not have given us an Ophelia and a Desdemona, or such sweet creatures as Cordelia and Rosalind."

"You have not made the Scripture your sole study, Mr. Wilson?"

"All these are Scripture indirectly, Mr. Falkland; rivers of human divinity from the sacred ocean."

"I am glad I came here," said Percy, taking his hand. "I am a child as yet in the way I should like to go; and I shall not find too stern a teacher."

"Do you require teaching?"

"Very sadly."

"Well, then, you have Heaven, and this book, and nature; and my humble efforts, under grace, are at your service most earnestly."

The Reverend Mr. Wilson saw what kind of man he had to deal with, and he did his spriting gently.

He rang for the housekeeper, and she conducted Percy to his room—a small apartment with a snowy bed, white curtains at the window, green trees waving outside, and the pure breath of country air coming in.

"I want to arrange terms," said Percy, taking out his purse, "if you will tell me, please."

He was himself surprised at the change that had come over him—the gentleness with which he spoke.

The terms were moderate for a gentleman of means—eight pounds a month for everything. He placed a five-pound note and three sovereigns on the table, and then felt that for a month at least that quiet home was his.

(To be continued.)

ONE of the smallest books that have ever been printed has just been published in Paris. It is the story of Perrault, Little Hop o' My Thumb. There are eighty pages of printed matter and four engravings. The book is thirty-eight millimeters long, twenty-eight wide and six thick, and its weight is only five grammes. The little volume is a complete book in every way, the binding being perfect, the pages duly numbered, and the title-page appearing with all the formality of the most dignified volume. The pages can only be read by the use of a microscope; but then it is found that the printing is clear and that the proof reading has been excellently done. Several men in France are carrying these volumes inside their watch covers. A copy presented to a French library has been duly entered in the catalogues and placed on the shelves.

A SOLDIER AND A MAN.

(Continued from page 441.)

He was in great distress, as a father must be who is going to see the end of the life of a son on whom he had built his hopes—the only one of his children who was worth anything, he had been used to say, when he was a child. But how worthless he had turned out!

Together they went to the miserable place where the dying man lay—for dying Arthur Vandaleur certainly was—past all human aid. There had been a slight accident on the railway, and he had been hurt—slightly as was at first supposed; to death it turned out.

He confessed everything to them, for there was a germ of blood in him after all, or he would not have sent for the girl he had wronged to hear the truth from his own lips.

The next day they left Antwerp again. There was no need for them to stay; Squire Vandaleur's second son was the heir now, and Arthur's faults and follies were at an end for ever.

"It will all come right now, my dear," Sir John said to his niece, as they entered the railway carriage that was to take them on the first stage of their journey home. "Only have patience. We will have Darcie back, if I go to Africa myself to fetch him!"

Violet smiled; there was something like hope in her heart now, though it was very faint, and she now put a newspaper in her hand—an English one, that he had purchased at the station.

"It's yesterday's," he said. "But it will be all news to us;" and he buried himself behind a sheet of the *Times*, while Violet turned over the *Telegraph*, her thoughts wandering far away to Africa and Darcie Brunton.

"Violet, my dear, give me that paper, this will be pleasant reading for you," Sir John said presently, and his face was full of horror and pity as he spoke. But his words fell on unheeding ears—Violet had fallen back in her place in a dead faint. She lay there white and rigid, and it almost seemed to her uncle as if it would be better she should die—for the paper contained the miserable story of the end of the expedition. It had been set upon, and almost totally destroyed. The names of the killed were given, and Darcie Brunton's headed the list.

Twelve months were gone by, Diana had been quietly married, and the infant heir of the house of Lennox was being spoiled to his heart's content at the Sycamores.

When Violet made her appearance there on a short visit she was not the bright fairy-like Vi of former days.

Slight and *spirituelle* she could not help being—and lovely she would be, to her life's end; but never more the bright, happy girl who had never known a sorrow from the hour of her going to her uncle's house to live.

One day she and another sister named Barbara were called to an hotel in the city, where a gentleman was lying very ill.

He had only just arrived there, and had not been able to give any orders or even his name, and the proprietor had sent to them having had a nurse from their house in his establishment before.

Sister Barbara was there already, but could not undertake the whole duty, and Violet packed her little bag and set forth to assist her.

"I am afraid it is too late to see him die, miss!" the waiter said, who took her up to the room door. "And we can't find out anything about him—whether he has any friends or not. He was getting change at the bar when he just fell down as if all the life was going out of him, and there he has lain ever since." Sister Barbara had tried everything that she could think of, and the doctors had done all they could, and were coming again before night—but it was very hopeless.

Sister Ernestine tried a course of treatment of her own, which very much astonished and scandalised the more staid and elderly lady who

was her colleague. She bent over the wan wasted figure in the bed, and looked at the hollow cheeks with a curious stare of wonderment and fear. Then she lifted the heavy head and kissed it passionately. "He shall not die! he shall not die!" she gasped, and then went into hysterics herself.

Sister Barbara was wise in her generation, and she did not ring the bell nor make a fuss, but attended to her young assistant, and brought her back to her senses again, like a sensible woman as she was.

In two hours from that time Sir John came into the room where his daughter sat with her husband, and the juvenile tyrant of their united lives, and put a telegram on the table before them.

"I am afraid poor Vi has gone out of her mind," he said. "Read this!"

They read it wondering. "Come to me—all of you. I have found him—he is not dead."

It was dated from a city hotel, and they guessed how it was. The insensible patient was Darcie Brunton, if indeed Violet had not made some terrible mistake.

As soon as a fast train could take them—Sir John and Colonel Lennox were with Violet in the sitting-room allotted to the two nurses, listening to her broken words of thankfulness and joy.

He was awake, and he knew her, and he was so far restored as to be able to ask for his friends. But they had no knowledge yet how he came to be there, or how he had escaped the fate of his companions.

The knowledge came in due course. But for many a long day Darcie Brunton hovered between life and death, tended with watchful care by his wife that was to have been, and her coadjutor.

And then there came a day when he was able to be moved into the country, and the Sycamores opened its doors to him, and he was once more amongst the flowers and waving trees of an English country home.

Violet was not with him then—she had gone back to the home, her feelings strangely mingled. She had helped to nurse him back to life; while he was fighting with death he seemed her own. Now that the fear was over the shadow of Arthur Vandaleur rose up between them, and stopped the loving words and caresses that were in her heart to give.

She knew now how it was that he had not received her letter. The unlucky expedition had remained but a very little while in Zanzibar, pushing on in fear of hostile pursuit; and the misadventure had doubtless travelled after them as far as possible and got lost, as many others had done.

That he escaped from the massacre was due to the fact that he was left for dead and fell in with a friendly native afterwards. But it had been a year before he could get back to civilisation, and it was only through the help of different Consuls in the various places he had to pass that he was able to reach England.

He had no idea of concealing his identity longer than the next day or so at the farthest, when he was stricken down with the illness which would, in all probability, have proved fatal but for the timely care and good nursing bestowed upon him by Sister Ernestine and her friend.

It was from Diana's lips that he learned all that had passed during his absence, and how precipitate he had been in going away.

And it was she who brought Violet to him when his despondency seemed in a fair way to lay him once more on a bed of sickness, and bade them be thankful that they had found each other, and not "fly in the face of Providence."

Society has never been able to settle satisfactorily the real facts of the delay in the marriage of Mr. and Mrs. Brunton—nor exactly why the gentleman went away and the lady turned Sister of Mercy; but as Sir John and his daughter both say, it is no business of anyone's but the persons most interested, and they are away enjoying their honeymoon, and out of hearing of all the twaddle that is talked.

And when they come back the world will receive them with open arms, and will have found it expedient to forget that there was anything

mysterious about it; and the gossip regarding Arthur Vandaleur's lost venture, which Darcie Brunton's sudden return aroused in all its freshness will have died out for ever.

[THE END.]

INTERESTING ITEMS.

—20—

THE latest naval novelty is a so-called roller steamer, which is being built by M. Bazin, a French engineer. It is described as a large raft, supported by wheels. M. Bazin claims not only enhanced speed but greater stability, the friction being minimised by the boat's rolling over the water instead of cutting through it. The trial steamer for Channel service will be 131 feet in length and 39 feet in breadth, with three wheels on each side. She will make her first trip from Dieppe to Newhaven, and thence to London. A Transatlantic steamer will be built later. She will consist of a platform, having on each side four enormous hollow wheels, which will support her at a height of 21 to 23 feet above the surface of the water.

AMONG the triumphs of inventive genius is a new fish-trap that promises to simplify the operation of fishing, and permit the angler to capture his prey by a clever artifice. A small mirror is suspended by a swivel and chain, and before it hangs a squirming, wriggling bait. The fish gets his eye on this, and with a greed characteristic of other creatures beside fishes, thinks he will catch the bait before the other fish that he sees in the mirror coming directly toward it can get there, therefore he makes a snap for the bait and swallows it, hook and all, at the same time bumping himself sharply against the surface of the mirror, all of which operation is supposed to facilitate the secure hooking of the deluded fish. A similar trap is used in India for catching tigers. The savage beast sees another tiger, as he supposes, making for the bait, and immediately hurries to secure it, forgetting in his haste his usual caution and desire to investigate.

WE have been accustomed to connect the fabrication of attar of roses with Persia and Syria, and even now India and Constantinople furnish probably the largest market for it; but, although the art of making it was discovered in Persia, the manufacture has now nearly or quite died out, and the centre of the business is now the country about Kazanlik, on the south slope of the Balkans, close to the Shkips or Wild Rose pass, famous in the history of the Russo-Turkish war. The rose-growing belt is situated at an average altitude of one thousand feet above the sea and extends to a length of about seventy miles with an average breadth of ten miles. On this ground countless rose blossoms are produced. The number of varieties cultivated is very small. Ninety per cent. of all the blossoms are from a bushy variety of the Rose Damascena, or damask rose, known to the gardeners mainly as the ancestor from which the infinite variety of hybrid perpetual roses derive a large part of their blood. Of the remaining ten per cent. a part are gathered from the white musk rose, which is frequently planted as a hedge around the fields of pink Damascena. While the rest are furnished by a dark red variety of Damascena, other sorts of roses have been tried, but some yield no attar at all, and others give an essence having the perfume of violets, or pineapples, or hyacinth rather than of roses.

AMONG the poor of Palestine the dinner was by no means a ceremonious meal. A large circular tray of tinned copper placed on a wooden stool served as a table. In the centre of this stood another big tray, with a mountain of plaff, composed of rice boiled and buttered, with small pieces of meat strewn through and upon it. This was the chief dish, though there were other small dishes, both meat and vegetable. Ten persons sat round the table, or rather squatted on the carpet, with their knees drawn up close to their bodies. Each had before him a plate

of tinned copper and a wooden spoon. Some, however, preferred to use the fingers of the left hand instead of the spoon, several dipping their hands together into the dish. As soon as any one had finished he rose and went into another room, to have water poured over his hands to wash them, and the vacant place was instantly filled by a new comer. The bread, I may say, was laid on the mat under the tray, so as to be easily reached, and a jar of water, the only beverage used during the meal, stood within reach. Besides rice, stews of beans or cracked wheat, with thick soup or sauce poured over them in the great central bowl, are also in fashion. Spoons are often altogether lacking, pieces of thin bread, doubled, serving instead. Knives and forks are unknown, and as there is no special dining-room there is no furniture suited for one. Hence tables and chairs are never seen. The meat being always cut up into small pieces, there is no need for a knife, and chickens can easily be torn asunder with the hands.

DURING the times of the Franco-German conflict France brought the science of carrier-pigeons up to a high standard of efficiency. Then it was thought that no superior to this little bird could be found as a carrier of despatches. But the French military authorities are beginning to think differently now. Experiments have been made with the swallow, and he has proved to be swifter, surer, and altogether more satisfactory. There is the great probability, therefore, that swallows will be part of the army equipment for the next campaign. It has also been proposed that storks be trained for despatch service, the theory being that the "nest instinct" in these birds, their swift, certain flight, their tremendous wing and leg power, and their strength to meet any attack whatsoever in the air would render them ideal messengers of war. The stork certainly would combat successfully any hawk and almost any eagle. Beside, his splendid strength would make it possible for a great bundle of despatches of a weight and size that a dozen carrier pigeons or swallows would be unable to convey to be sent at once under one cover. During the past year a number of falcons have been put into training for the Russian army despatch service, and have proved eminently satisfactory. The falcon himself is a most war-like bird, and ardently resists every attack made upon him. It has been reserved for Germany to bring forward dogs as war animals. An exhibition of "war dogs" has recently been held in Dresden, and some splendid specimens of canine warriors shown. As an attacking column these dogs will show a formidable front against the soldiery of any other nation, and as discouragers of hesitancy during the retreat of an enemy will prove invaluable to the regiment possessing them. Brigades of dragoons and hussars will doubtless be superseded by dog platoons.

FACETIE.

HE: "Do you know, I think you are a most singular girl!" She (coolly): "I assure you it isn't from choice."

HE: "When I was young I decided to make one woman happy." She: "Well, as you remained a bachelor you have succeeded in doing so."

MOTHER: "If you wanted to go fishing, why didn't you ask me, instead of running off and going!" Johnnie (speaking from experience): "Because I wanted to go fishin'."

MISS ELDERLY: "What lovely port, Mr. Bee-swing! I suppose it's very old!" Bee-swing: "I believe you! Why, I should think when I put that pipe down you were quite a baby."

AN impecunious artist took a picture to "mine uncle." The man of pledges said: "If you will take the picture out, I'll advance a trifle on the frame!" The artist has not recovered yet.

JONES (to Brown): "Where can you be running to at that railway pace?" Brown: "Why, this is a present for my wife, a bonnet, and I am trying to get home before the fashion changes."

BROWN: "That's a curious paper-weight you've got there, Smith. What is it?" I never saw one like it before." Smith: "Well, that's the first cake my daughter made after a six months' course at a cookery school."

"My dear fellow," said one foreign nobleman to another, "I have just met your American fiancée. I want to congratulate you. You have a prize." "Yes," was the complacent reply; "and the beauty of it is that she's a cash prize."

MISS BRICKKROW: "Is that lady a new boarder?" Mrs. Brickkrow: "No, she has only rented a quiet room here to work in." She is writing a book on 'How to Bring Up Children.' "Why doesn't she write at home?" "Too noisy. She has children."

TIMED HOUSEKEEPER (in employment agency): "Oh, dear! I wonder if there'll ever be any solution to the servant-girl problem." Employment Agent: "Oh, yes, mum. My wife solved it long ago." "Well, well! How?" "She got rid of the hull gann, an' did th' work herself."

MAGISTRATE (to prisoner): "You say you took the hair because you are out of work and your family are starving; and yet I understand that you have four dogs about the house?" Prisoner: "Yes, your honour; but I wudden't ask my family to eat dogs, your honour."

MANAGER: "Your play is very well written, but it won't do for these days—wouldn't run a week." Young Author (modestly): "What changes would you suggest?" Manager: "Kill 'em all off in the first act, and fill up the other four acts with songs, an' dances, an' things."

AN author reads his latest farce to the manager of a theatre, who listens sadly without saying a word. The author says: "I wish to call your attention to the fact that at this joke I have written 'Here the duke laughs.'" Manager: "He does, oh! Lucky duke!"

CHORUS of ladies to comely curate, who is ascending the ladder to hang harvest decorations: "Oh, Mr. Sweetlow, do take care! Don't go up—so dangerous! Do come down. Oh!" Rector (sarcastically): "Really, Sweetlow, don't you think you'd better let a married man do that?"

JONES: "Hallo, Bill! I hear you have a position with my friends Skinner & Co.?" Bill: "Oh, yes; I have a position as collector there!" Jones: "That's first-rate. Who recommended you?" Bill: "Oh, nobody. I told them that I once collected an account from you, and they instantly gave me the place."

SCRIBBLER: "By Jove! Wilkes, your column of personal gossip in the last number of your paper was the raciest thing I know. Where did you get all the information?" Wilkes: "My wife had the Sewing Circle at our house last Saturday, and I concealed a phonograph in the room."

"HAROLD," murmured the blushing girl, as the enraptured youth slipped a diamond ring on her taper finger, "everybody says my twin sister and I look exactly alike, but you will always know us apart, won't you?" "Of course," said Harold, ecstatically. "I'll know you by this ring, my dear—why, what's the matter?"

PRUDENCE is one of the virtues that naturally go with age, but sometimes it is developed early. "William," said a thoughtful mother, "your Uncle Thomas will be here to dinner to-day, and you must wash your face." "Yes, ma," said the thrifty William, "but 'sposen he don't come. What then?"

A GLUTTONOUS and ill-mannered gentleman was invited to dinner. At a certain stage he muttered, "What a miserable set-out." His entertainer overheard the remark, and said, "Look here, my friend; an accomplished gastronomist like yourself ought to go and marry his cook." "Exactly; but I should never marry yours."

"I ASK for the hand of your daughter," said the applicant. "Have you any prospects for the future?" asked the parent. "None whatever." "She hasn't any, either. Take her, my boy, and be happy."

SMALL BOY (to mamma, tucking his sister in bed): "Tuck in my footies, too, mamma." Small Sister (severely): "You mustn't say footies; you must say feet. One foot is a foot, and two footies is feet!"

"Be mine," he whispered. Something in the sweet girl's manner warned him that it was no good. "Don't say," he hastened to add, "that you are not old enough to accept me!" "Mr. Flathers," said the maiden, "I had not the least intention of saying that I was not old enough to accept you. I was about to remark, in fact, that I was old enough not to accept you."

"Now, Stimson, answer me this. If your father owes me fifty pounds, and promises to pay at the rate of five pounds a week, how much will he owe me in ten weeks?" Stimson (promptly): "Fifty pounds, sir." It went against the grain of the schoolmaster to have to send Stimson to the bottom of the class, because he knew that Stimson was right.

A PERMAN living near Newcastle-on-Tyne was once in London, and during his stay there visited many places, amongst which was the Royal Academy. On his return home he was telling a friend all that he had seen, and, on mentioning the Royal Academy, his friend asked him what he thought of it. "Man," says he, "there were some grand picture-frames."

SUE (who has just been asked to play something on the piano): "I really can't play anything." Tommy: "Say, Sue, why don't you play that piece you spoke to me about?" Sue: "What piece?" Tommy: "Why that one you told me to ask you to play when we had company, cause you knew it better on any of the others. I forgot the name." Then Sue got mad and Tommy went to bed.

YOUNG ARTIST (to friend): "Charlie, do you see that lady and gentleman who are looking at my picture, and talking in such low, earnest tones?" Friend: "Yes." Young Artist: "I wish you would saunter carelessly by, and find out what they are saying. It looks like business." Friend (after sauntering carelessly by): "She is blowing him up, Gus, for leaving off his flannels too soon."

SUNDAY SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT: "I am pained to learn that some little boys would rather spend their pocket-money for ginger-beer than give it to the good missionaries to convert the poor heathen. Now, you wouldn't do that, would you, Johnny?" Good Little Johnny: "No, sir." "Now tell these boys, Johnny, why you wouldn't spend your money for ginger-beer." "Cause I like ice cream a lot better."

AT SOMERSET HOUSE.—First Department Official: "I had a strange experience to-day—very strange." Second Department Official: "You look as if you'd seen a ghost. Come, tell me the story: anything to relieve the monotony." "It is not a ghost story." "Well, well; out with it." "A man came to me to-day to ask about a matter which I couldn't refer to any other department, and I actually had to attend to it myself!"

DURING Ascot week a young man engaged in a City office decided to have the time off and go to the races, but, fearing his employer would refuse him the holiday, he sent a telegram to the effect that he was taken suddenly ill and could not attend to business. At the end of the week he arrived at the office with a face on him the colour of a fresh piece of polished mahogany, the effects of the sun. "Are you better?" asked his employer. "Very much, thank you, sir," was the reply. "What's been the matter with you?" "Well, sir, the doctor hardly knew, and I'm sure I don't; some kind of fever, I think." "Ah, yes, to be sure! Shall I tell you what kind of fever it was?" "If you could, sir, I should feel more at ease." "Well, then, by the look of your face, and if I am anything of a physiognomist, you have had a touch of the Ascot fever. You can take a month's notice."

SOCIETY.

THE Duke of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha is expected back in England in the late autumn.

Owing to the ill-health of her second brother, and the minority of the youngest, the Grand Duchess Xenia of Russia will occupy, for some years to come, much the same position in her native country as the Duchess of Fife takes in England.

SIR MATTHEW WHITE RIDLEY, the Home Secretary, has resigned the chairmanship of the Northumberland County Council.

SIR E. MALET is about to retire from his duties as British Ambassador at Berlin, but the actual date of his leaving Berlin is not yet known.

It is stated that the Queen has received a curious present from the Nizam of Hyderabad in the form of a history of her reign written most wonderfully in Hindustani in the form of a tree. It took twelve months to complete, and was sent as a birthday gift, so its presentation has been rather delayed.

THE Queen was among the successful exhibitors at the fourteenth Exhibition of the Royal Isle of Wight Agricultural Society's Show at Newport. Her Majesty took first and second honours in the classes for agricultural horses, and two special three first, and one second prizes for sheep and lambs.

THE Duke of Athole, of our British nobility, may claim to have the greatest number of titles. Besides his dukedom, he holds two marquisesates, five earldoms, three viscounties, eight baronies, and is also a Knight of the Thistle. Twenty distinct titles in all. He is, moreover, co-heir of five other baronies.

THE Queen has consented to allow a bazaar to be held in the grounds of Carisbrooke Castle in aid of the funds of the Isle of Wight Rifle Volunteers, which is to be opened on Wednesday, August 14th, by Princess Beatrice, who will then be residing at Osborne with Her Majesty. Prince Henry of Battenberg is the colonel of the Isle of Wight Volunteers, the "Princess Beatrice's Own" regiment.

THE Queen of the Belgians is at Spa, and will remain there some weeks. On her arrival at this charming watering-place Her Majesty was presented with a bronze bust of herself, and a cantata was sung by a corps of trained vocalists, the houses being profusely decorated with flowers, and the streets brilliantly illuminated. Her Majesty has purchased a fine house at Spa, and has been entertaining the Duc d'Aumale there.

THE people of Serbia are for ever fasting. The most severe fast is that of Lent, which lasts seven whole weeks. Then, on the 30th of June is the Fast of St. Peter, which lasts two weeks, and is observed by some persons for four weeks. From the 1st to the 15th of August they keep the fast of St. Mary, while Christmas is preceded by a forty days' fast. Apart from these lengthy fasts, every Friday and every Wednesday throughout the year is held to be a fast day.

THE Empress of Japan is getting more and more European in her ideas, and has for some time past entirely discarded the national dress in favour of costumes made for her in Paris. At Court ceremonies she invariably appears in a handsome gown with the regulation Court train as we understand it here, which makes her look a trifle 'than ever, although she tries to "add a cubit to her stature" by wearing shoes with tremendously high heels. Her Majesty has very independent ideas about the position of women, and is the first Empress of Japan who ever had the moral courage to appear in public seated side by side with the Emperor in his carriage. The Empress is a kind and charitable woman, and, like the members of our own Royal Family, is constantly bringing her influence to bear upon her people on behalf of hospitals, asylums for orphan children, and similar benevolent projects.

STATISTICS.

THE cost of running one of the great Atlantic liners is £1,200 per day.

IN Dublin the rainfall is nearly 20 per cent. greater than in London.

THE Opera House in Paris covers nearly three acres of ground.

ALL the world over there are ninety-eight women to one hundred men.

LONDON fires show an average of about forty a week.

THE largest nugget of gold ever found weighed 2,020 ounces, and was worth £8,373.

THE average age of widowers when remarrying is 42; of widows, 31.

THE complement of seamen on board a first-class man-of-war is about 800.

AN average of three British seamen lose their lives every day by drowning, and 300 British steamers and sailing vessels are lost yearly at sea.

GEMS.

THE happiness of your life depends upon the character of your thoughts.

INSULTS, it is said, are like counterfeit money; we cannot hinder them being offered, but we are not compelled to take them.

THE man who thinks he could easily and happily arrange his own circumstances, even for a single day, is not less ignorant of God than of himself.

TAKE all your smallest sorrows, your least cares, your slightest annoyances to God; the friend who can and will sympathize in these will soon become your choicest friend.

TEMPTATION often assails the finest natures, as the pecking sparrow or the destructive wasp attacks the sweetest and mellowest fruit, eschewing what is sour and crude.

MANY an act of duty or self-sacrifice, at first supposed to be impossible, has, by continual contemplation, become so attuned to the disposition that it has been performed with ease and even with pleasure.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

MINT SAUCE.—One-fourth of a pint of vinegar, four tablespoonfuls of chopped mint and two of sugar. Let stand for an hour or more before using.

CABBAGE SALAD.—Two raw eggs well beaten, six tablespoonfuls of cream, one half teaspoonful salt, six teaspoonfuls of vinegar, and a small piece of butter. Put on the fire and cook, stirring constantly until quite thick. Have half a head of cabbage chopped fine, sprinkled with salt. Add to the dressing when cold two tablespoonfuls of cream and pour over the cabbage.

TREACLE SCONES.—Halfpound flour, two ounces currants, one teaspoonful treacle, half teaspoonful soda, a pinch of tartaric acid, two teaspoonfuls sugar. Put the flour and all the dry things in a basin, mix the treacle and a little butter milk together, and mix to a soft dough. Make into a scone, roll out the ordinary thickness, and either cut in round scones or square, and bake on the griddle or in the oven.

BOILED LEMON PUDDING.—Two cups of dry bread crumbs, one cup powdered beef suet, four tablespoonfuls flour. Prepare one half cup of sugar, one large lemon—all the juice and half the peel—four eggs whipped light, one large cup of milk. Soak the bread crumbs in the milk, add the suet; beat the eggs and sugar together, and stir these well into the soaked bread. To these put the lemon, lastly the flour, beaten in with as few strokes as will suffice to mix up all into a thick batter. Boil three hours in a buttered mould. Eat hot with wine sauce.

MISCELLANEOUS.

BICYCLING in the French army is now to be placed on a more recognized footing, and special uniforms are to be made for the various corps.

THE Japanese propose to erect a great monument built of iron, and similar to the Eiffel Tower in commemoration of their victories.

THE temperature of the cucumber is one degree below that of the surrounding atmosphere. It is therefore apparent that the expression "cool as a cucumber" is scientifically correct.

A NOVEL pair of pocket scissors are exhibited in London. They are said to duty as a cigar and flower cutter, gas pliers, ordinary pliers, wire cutter, coin tester, paper knife, nail knife, screw driver, a 3-inch measure, a pincher, and a railway key.

NARROW-CHESTED men will not in future be refused admittance to the Prussian army, but are to be measured monthly, and those whose chests are not widened by the drill are to be discharged as pre-disposed to consumption. All are to be considered narrow-chested whose chests are less in circumference than half the length of their bodies.

ALUMINIUM neckties are now being introduced. They are really made of the cosmopolitan metal, and frosted or otherwise ornamented in various shapes imitating the ordinary silk or satin article. They are fastened to the collar button or by a band around the neck, and are particularly recommended for summer wear, since they can be easily cleaned when soiled, while they are not perceptibly heavier than cotton, cambric, or silk.

A JOCKEY's diet when in training is as follows: Breakfast, a small piece of bread-and-butter and one cup of tea. Dinner, fish. If fish cannot be procured, a little bit of some light pudding and very little meat. Tea, same as breakfast. Supper, nothing. He goes to bed at nine and rises at six. His usual beverage is wine and water, in the proportion of two parts of the latter to one of the former.

A "BAKER'S DOZEN," meaning thirteen, dates back to the time of Edward I., when very rigid laws were enacted regarding the sale of bread by bakers. The punishment for falling short in the sale of loaves by the dozen was so severe that, in order to run no risk, the bakers were accustomed to give thirteen or fourteen loaves to the dozen, and thus arose this peculiar expression.

THE peat-bed is the embryo coal-field. If peat-beds could remain undisturbed they would, in time, be transformed into mineral coal. They are composed of the roots of plants which grow very rapidly, interlacing and matting themselves until they are almost like a solid mass. These roots die out below, but the top layers are the crowns from which the new growth springs every year. Naturally, when they have remained for a long time unmolested, the layer of roots becomes enormously thick. Peat is used in almost all of the countries of Europe for fuel. Recent investigations prove that the cultivation of this plant and its utilization would be of the greatest advantage to the poor who have to depend upon coal for heating purposes. When peat is dug by those who understand its value the top layer is taken off and carefully put aside. The root growth is then cut out and the sod is replaced and pressed down to be ready for growth the next season. It is often the case that under the top layers there will be found a quantity of root-stalks, leaves, and sometimes trunks of trees. This becomes quite solid, and is called peat fibre. Below this there is a black, pitchy compound that in some instances, when it has long been in position, may be cut smoothly, showing a surface almost like wax. This is the most valuable part of the peat, and gives out a tremendous heat and a good deal of black smoke. Peat bogs must be drained and carefully managed in order to yield the best results. Peat is cut out in blocks, and is sometimes pressed or moulded into shape.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

MAXWELL.—Not until a divorce is obtained.

CLARA.—It is not dangerous if properly done.

M. S.—We should say the pension will be forfeited.

TROUBLED WIFE.—Your marriage is quite legal under whatever name you were married.

R. M.—Everything depends on the term of the hiring.

SALLY.—Scour first with soap, then with clean hot water.

ADA.—Possibly you may get the crosses out by steaming.

JENNIE.—We can only recommend you to take them to a furrier.

A. C. S.—Please be more explicit; we cannot understand the case at all.

ANNIE.—She can bequeath everything as she likes. If no will, husband will take all.

HORTER.—The meat should be served in courses on individual plates.

TROUBLED.—Your best course would be to put the matter into the hands of a solicitor.

MIMI.—Wash them with hot soap suds, and leave them to dry in the open air.

AMBER.—Success as an actress demands natural talent, hard work, and unceasing study.

ROGER.—We do not pretend to give medical advice. Go to a surgeon or physician.

DOUBTFUL.—You cannot do better than to follow the treatment already recommended to you by your doctor.

H. J.—It would have to be done through the county court. The result would be very doubtful.

WARTHER.—An operation would do at once for you what will require months for nature to effect.

YOUNG NURSE.—Milk which has stood for over ten minutes in a sick room should never be drunk.

INQUIRER.—The clergyman of your parish would probably know of a place suited to your requirements.

C. P.—Release generally takes place after twenty years, provided good conduct has been maintained.

STELLA R.—We must confess to being unable to fully understand your question. If the second marriage is legally performed there is nothing to fear.

DURIOUS.—The pictures are really of no value, probably neither would bring more than 3s. 6d., or about a fourth of the price of the framing.

A. QUINCY.—No member of our Royal Family in the direct line except the Sovereign can legally marry without the consent of the Crown.

ED.—Get rid of it by paring the top off with a sharp razor, and daily thereafter touching it with acetic acid; it will break up and disappear.

E. N.—The vine attains a great age, continuing fruitful for at least four hundred years. It is supposed to be equal to the oak as regards longevity.

KITTY.—You might try pressing powdered fuller's earth lightly upon the greasy places, and leave it there till the sea soaks out the grease.

CURIOUS.—Sea shells murmur because the vibrations of the air, not otherwise observable, are collected in the shell, and by its shape are brought to a focus.

IN WANT OF ADVICE.—The climate is exceedingly fine, the temperature being very like that of the South of France where our invalids go both in summer and winter.

L. W.—Children wear mourning for twelve months for a parent; the widower or widow continues the badge of bereavement for life, or until they marry again.

WYNNIE.—Place the piano diagonally (three-cornered-wise) about midway up at side opposite windows; this arrangement gives opportunity for draping back of instrument.

BOR.—If this country were involved in serious war, the Government or Parliament might certainly call upon the volunteers to offer for foreign service, but could not compel them to do so.

ANDREW.—It is usual for the Crown to board and lodge their witnesses in all cases where those have been brought from a distance and are unable to obtain their meals in the regular way at home.

COMETARY READER.—Interest or usury was customary in ancient times as much as at present; indeed, rates of interest were extravagantly high in many cases, and extortion was not uncommon.

LORE.—We should say washing the part with water containing a little borax would do good, or making a pomade of one part borax and three parts glycerine, to be rubbed on at night and washed off in the morning.

S. A.—Recruits are not admitted into the infantry regiments under five feet six inches in stature and a girth round the chest of not less than thirty-four inches, with the arms raised above the head.

BEANIE.—Sponge well and carefully with a weak solution of coffee water. Be careful not to wet the silk too much, and restore the lustre after sponging. Give a careful rubbing with a soft silk handkerchief.

AGGIE.—Feed it regularly, morning and evening, with plain, wholesome food. Very little meat, or none at all, if it gets on well. Mix a little powdered sulphur in its food occasionally. Give it milk to drink.

O. C.—The cuckoo is a migratory bird; it arrives in this country about April or May, and leaves again in August or September for Africa (going as far south as the Cape) and India.

RODOLFE.—You will get a microscope which is in reality a toy for about 2s. 6d. with a magnifying power sufficient to gratify your curiosity; also a telescope with three mile power which may be conveniently carried in the pocket.

ALPHONSE.—Probably the only way to do would be to apply to the College of Heraldry. As for securing the object at very small cost, that depends altogether on the amount of labour involved.

H. M.—We know of no means whereby hair can be destroyed from the face without injury to the skin, except by use of the electric needle, which can only be employed by a skilled person.

TROUBLED BETA.—There are many people who are naturally pale, and no amount of exercise or out-of-door air would give them colour. It is not a subject for any concern, as it has nothing to do with health.

ETHEL.—Spread the stained portion over a basin or bowl. Pour clean, soft boiling water through it. If this does not suffice, rub some powdered borax on the place and pour on more boiling soft water. This will probably remove the stain.

ROSEMAID.—Due consideration for the young woman in question should make you very considerate about doing anything that could compromise her. You had better overcome your dislike for going to the house, and thus avoid subjecting her to any annoyance.

TROUBLED FATHER.—If the lad said he was eighteen years of age and looked it, it will be impossible to get him off now without payment; but write to the commanding officer stating your circumstances, and he may stretch a point in your favour.

THE WIFE'S SORROW.

All alone her tireless watch she kept
By the couch where the patient sufferer slept.
While the night bird its mate was calling.
She watched the clouds as they hid the sky,
Then, as swift winds swept them scurrying by,
A cloud on her life was falling.

By the silent couch she is kneeling now,
Her lips tight pressed to the pale, cold brow,
And the night bird has ceased its calling.
The still form awaits the shroud and pall,
While the drops tap the panes like a spirit's call.
Rain into her life is falling.

Hark! a voice she hears when the storm is past,
And the cold form lies in the dust at last.
'Tis a heavenly voice that is calling.
"Thy beloved hath but found sweet rest."
She clasps their child to her loving breast,
While balm on her heart is falling.

C. H. A.

ONE WHO WANTS TO KNOW.—To travel round the world without stint, and to be able to take advantage of seeing the various places as far as possible during the period of staying for coaling, &c., costs about £250, including payments of first-class passage.

J. S.—The position of their wives is a miserable one, if the consent of the commanding officer has not previously been obtained, because they are not allowed to reside in barracks or to accompany their husbands when ordered abroad.

A. MARTIN.—If soft padding in your boots is considered desirable, obtain that by lining them with felt, or having pads or cuttings of wool along the sole; that would be grateful to the person suffering from rheumatism.

ANNE.—Four pounds of the neck of beef, of which one pound only should be fat, half a pound crumb of stale bread in one piece put to soak in a bowl of hot water, two ounces salt, and half an ounce ground pepper.

RACHEL.—Lavender water is made by slowly steeping for one hour in a covered farina bottle a pound of fresh lavender with a pint of water. On its removal from the fire add two quarts of alcohol, filter and bottle for use.

GERALD.—In Turkey pashas of the first rank are called pashas of three tails, that number of horse tails having been formerly carried before them in public as a standard. Before those of inferior rank two horse tails were carried. This display in recent years has been dispensed with.

PERPLEXED.—Cousins' children are to each other second cousins. A and B are first cousins; A's children are first cousins once removed to B; and second cousins to B's children. A's grandchildren are first cousins twice removed to B; second cousins once removed to B's children, and third cousins to B's grandchildren.

P. C. P.—Formerly whoever after betrothment refused to proceed to marriage was liable to excommunication, till that species of punishment was abolished by 26 George II. c. 25. The only remedy now for an aggrieved party is an action at common law for breach of promise of marriage.

JASPER.—Monsoons are periodical winds which sweep the northern part of the Indian Ocean, changing their direction after an interval of about six months, and hence the term monsoon, the Angloised form of the Persian monsoon, or the Malay monsoon, signifying a season, referring to their periodicity.

S. A. F.—If the old paint is loose and fallen off in flakes they must be scraped to get off what is loose. The back of an old knife would answer for this, and if you want to smooth down you might go over it all with pumice stone. But if not in bad condition a washing over with soda and water, followed by clean water, using an old paint brush for both, would be sufficient.

A QUESTION OF ETIQUETTE.—There may be occasions when parties knowing each other by reputation, and secure in their knowledge of each other's character, may dispense with the usual formality and introduce themselves; but these occasions are rare. As a rule, see that the person desiring to make your acquaintance is properly introduced.

DUNSTAN.—The "Honours three" of Scotland are the Crown, Sword, and Sceptre of the Scottish Raptin in the Crown Room at Edinburgh Castle; it was for long supposed that the honours merely meant the number of cheers with which a toast is usually honoured, but it was found that the articles named were really called honours in ancient historical documents.

MIRA.—Boil a quart of milk, gradually stirring into it, while boiling, a quarter of a pound of farina. Then take it up, and while warm, mix into it a quarter of a pound of sugar, half a nutmeg, grated, and a wine-glass of rose-water. Then beat four eggs very light, and stir them gradually into the farina mixture. Bake it in a buttered, deep dish, and grate sugar over it when done.

RAMPARTSTRENGTH.—It is a qualification that demands by heredity; look back to your father and mother, or to their fathers and mothers, and note whether persons of your height were common among them; if so, there is no likelihood of your ever exceeding the height to which you have already attained; by trapeze and dumb-bell exercise you might certainly develop the stature you possess but cannot add to it.

LOVER OF THE "LONDON READER."—They should be scraped on the flesh side with a dull knife to remove all particles of fat, and cleaned thoroughly, then they may be rubbed with salt and alum and left two or three days covered on the flesh side with this mixture. They may then be rubbed in warm sawdust until flexible and soft. Some persons rub a preparation of arsenic thoroughly into the skin while soft.

MATTIE.—Stains from fruit juices are sometimes treated successfully with diluted oxalic acid, which must be thoroughly rinsed out with clean water as soon as it has removed the stain, but we cannot promise that it will not leave a discoloured patch behind. We should strongly advise your sending the garment to the dyers, who are far more likely to remove the stain without injury to the coat than an amateur.

OLIVER.—Take large close bunches of fine, ripe, thin-skinned grapes, and remove all that are imperfect. Tie a string in a loop to the top of the stem. Strain into a deep dish a sufficient quantity of the whites of eggs. Dip the bunches of grapes into them, immersing them thoroughly. Then drain them, and roll them about in a flat dish of finely powdered loaf-sugar until they are completely coated with it. Hang up the bunches by the strings until the icing is entirely dry. They are usually sent to the table on glass dishes.

B. L.—In the first place, all the fragments of flesh must be scrupulously removed with a knife, taking care not to bruise the inner skin; then dry with towels, and lay the skin on a flat board or slab; with hot water, soft soap, and a hard brush, thoroughly scrub the inside of the skin; when it has been made quite soft and flaccid, crush and mix two ounces of salts of tartar and one ounce of ammonia, and scrub that into the skin, wash it with dry sawdust, and in a short time it will be ready for the tanning pickle, which consists of one pound of fine animal, eight ounces corrosive sublimate (deadly poison), four ounces saltpetre, and one gallon vinegar; boil the vinegar, and pour it over the other things, stirring while in the act of pouring; when the mixture is cold put in the skin, letting it remain at least two days; then take out and strain tightly over a stretcher till it is quite dry; the skin should be ready for use in a week; during the process of drying comb and smooth the hair.

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